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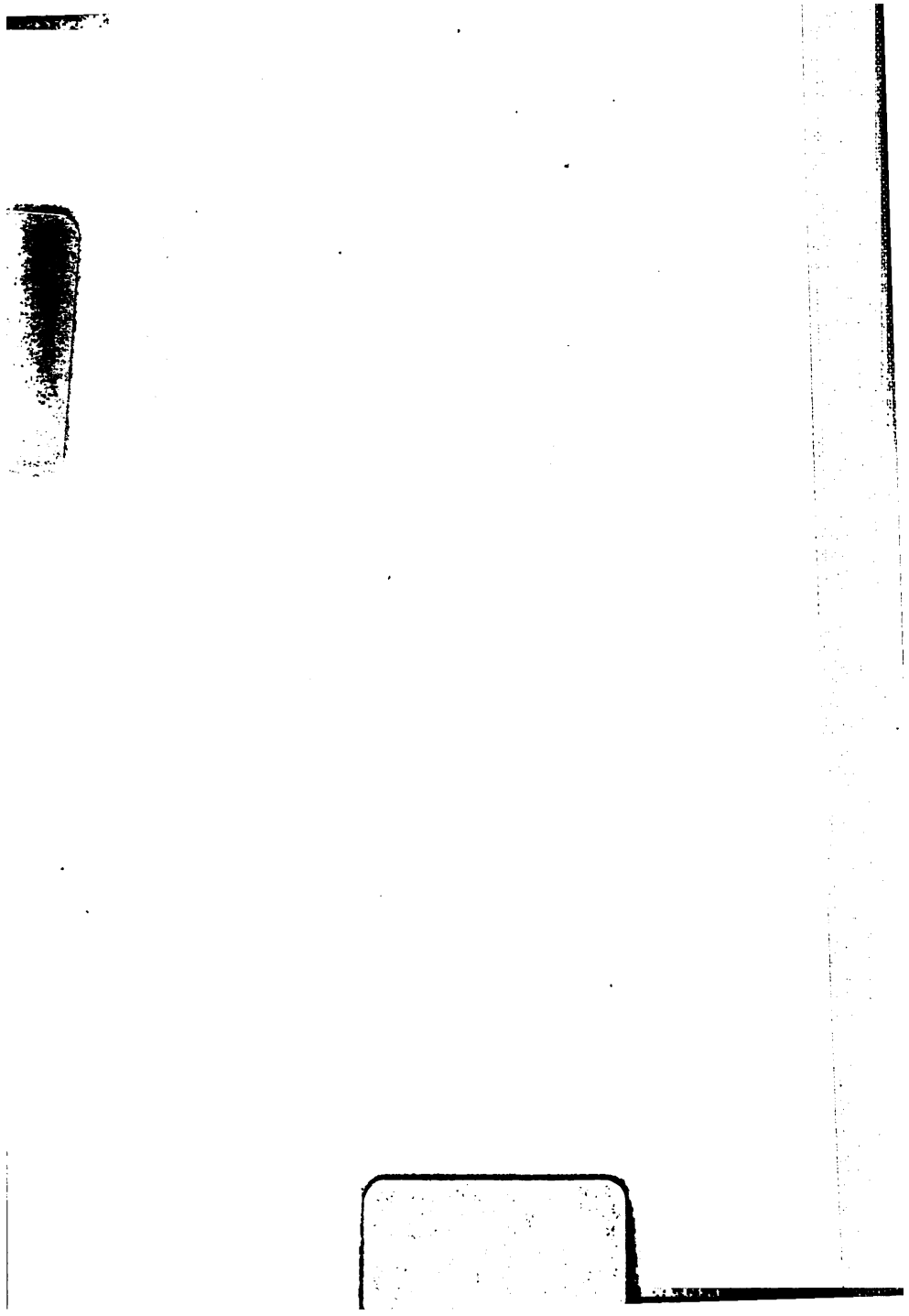

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THE BURNT MILLION

A Novel

BY

JAMES PAYN

AUTHOR OF

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"THE EAVESDROPPER" "THE HEIR OF THE AGES" ETC.

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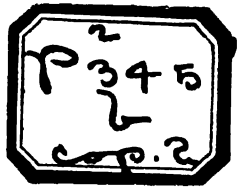

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THE BURNT MILLION.

CHAPTER I.

JOSH.

In the old court suburb, Kensington, there are still a few fine old houses standing back from the road, with gardens attached to them of considerable size, and adorned with noble trees, especially the cedar. Its "layers of shade," though deadly to the turf beneath them, are welcome indeed to the Londoner during the summer heats. As he sits on his rocking-chair, shut out from all the din and dust of the streets, and with only the muffled roar of the great city breaking on his ear like a distant sea—yet within reach of all that makes life worth living—he combines, as few can do, the advantages of town and country; the knowledge that the eye of the capitalist and the enterprising builder is on him, and that such pleasures will be short-lived, may decrease his enjoyment, but not in all cases.

In that of Mr. Joseph Tremenhere, for example, the tenant of Lebanon Lodge, who is thus enjoying a cigar of the finest brand and of the size of a sausage, this reflection is rather soothing than otherwise. He is a man who is not displeased with the notion of a transitory pleasure so long as it will last his time. As his lease has still to run for twenty years, and he is sixty-five years of age, this he thinks may be reckoned upon; and Mr. Tremenhere's calculations are generally correct.

He may have made one or two mistakes in life (though it would be difficult to convince him of it), but not in figures. He may not be good at music and the fine arts—though they are both in a sense at his service, in common with everything else that money can buy—but at "totting up," as he playfully terms it, he has no rival. He has totted up his own fortune, from the proverbial half-crown, with which as a friendless boy he came to London, to something like

a million of money. It is difficult to appreciate the magnitude of this sum, though a master of numbers has helped us to do so, by pointing out that the bunches of chestnut blossoms on one side of the long drive in Bushy Park—which seem to the unscientific eye innumerable—may be considered to "tot up" to that amount. "Sell them for a sovereign apiece," as Josh would say, "and there you are." Mr. Joseph Tremenhere, notwithstanding the great respect in which he is held by the world at large, is familiarly known by it as "Josh," and even called so by his more audacious clients to his face, and without rebuke. Indeed, supposing their rank is sufficiently high to justify it, he rather likes it; for it shows that he is hand and glove with them. Dukes have taken that pudgy hand of his with heart-felt, if transitory, gratitude, for he has dragged their graces out of many a hole. Its stumpy but scrupulously clean fingers sparkle with costly rings that have been bestowed upon him by noble lords in return for the assistance which Jews and lawyers have alike denied to them; they come to him as a last resort, and often express a genuine regret that they have not earlier applied to such a benefactor of their species; often, we say, but, it must be confessed, not always.

They are welcomed by him, without exception, with courtesy and good-will; if they are but frank with him, it is ten to one that they will not repent it; he finds meat on their bones, where others have assured them there is no meat; but in cases where there is so very little of it that it hardly repays Mr. Joseph Tremenhere for his trouble in discovering it, he naturally keeps it for himself. He is not going to set noblemen and gentlemen on their legs merely to walk away without fee; and their skeletons become his detractors. But who cares for what people say who have neither money nor credit? Certainly not Mr. Joseph Tremenhere. His own review of his past is as favorable as any one could expect—much more so than most reviews. Josh's temper is something angelic; he has stood things which very few people, even philosophers, could have borne without indignation; and his conscience is even more under control. Its still small voice was always the reverse of importunate, and Josh is growing a little deaf. One may almost say that it *never* troubles him. When he looks back upon his life he is astonished, like the great shaker of the pagoda-tree, at his own moderation. He has done pretty well for himself, no doubt, but in some cases he might (as he reflects with a sigh) have done even better. He thinks over his feats of finance with a pardonable pride, for indeed they have

been unparalleled. He has rushed in where lawyers have feared to tread, and snatched from ruin scores of great estates, or at all events portions of them. He has stood in the way between them and hundreds of grasping, greedy creditors, and defied them; whip in hand, he has gone down among the snarling crowd, and slashed their faces for them; nay, he has done far more dangerous things—trodden on the very confines of the criminal law—the crust of the volcano—and yet saved both himself and his client.

His future, so far as he concerns himself with such a matter, is assured to him. If he has to live on his principal—which would, however, seem to him a very monstrous notion, much as the idea of living by theft would seem to the intelligent and doubtless honest reader—he could still live all the rest of his life in great prosperity, or, as he himself would have expressed it, "like a fighting-cock."

It is, indeed, the vast amount of money he has made, strange as it may seem, which troubles him.

"What will become of it when I am gone?" is the question he is always putting to himself; how to preserve it to his children; how to prevent them from doing away with it themselves, and especially other people from doing away with it for them. He does not want *them* to be coming cap in hand to some other "Josh," to entreat him to save something of *his* property out of the fire for them. He has a bad opinion of other "Joshes," if indeed there is one in all Christendom worthy to be called by his great name. In Judea there certainly is not. Mr. Joseph Tremenhere is a Jew himself (though some people call him a Samaritan), but a very "wet" Jew; not at all solicitous about the weightier matters of the law, much less the smaller ones, and seldom seen at synagogue. He has fought and conquered his brethren of Israel many times, and none of them, as well they know, can stand against him: it is something to be the greatest money-lender that London has ever produced; but Mr. Joseph Tremenhere is far more than that; he is a money-maker. Out of estates mortgaged to the hilt, out of fortunes sunk in the sand, he has wrung the red gold.

Just at present, however, he is thinking of none of these things, but of his daughter, little Grace, for it is her birthday. She is now coming to him down the lawn, with her straw hat in both her hands, the sun shining on her blue-black hair, and lighting up every line of her Spanish-looking face with beauty. She is slight, and not very tall; but her figure is exquisitely graceful; she has passed the brook of childhood, for she is seventeen, yet still seems to be stand-

ing on the hither brink of it; her father calls her "his little Fairy," which requires no great stretch of imagination, for she, in truth, resembles one; her eyes are so bright, and her face so full of glee, that under the dark cedar she moves like sunshine.

"You naughty, naughty girl!" murmurs her proud father, lovingly; "why are you without your hat? You will have a sunstroke."

"But see what I have got *in* my hat, papa!"

He has been so entranced by his darling's beauty that he has not looked at her hat, which he now perceives to be full of the most lovely flowers, all white ones.

His face clouds over in a moment: perhaps the idea that such flowers are used at funerals occurs to his mind, and connects this fragile little creature—the child of his old age—with the grave.

"Who has sent you these?" he inquires, gravely, almost sternly.

"I don't know; they have just come, with nothing but this card with them, 'To Fairy on her birthday;' is it not kind of somebody?"

Mr. Joseph Tremenhere takes the card and examines the handwriting carefully, and by no means with a pleased expression of countenance.

"Do you know who it is, papa? Oh, do tell me, that I may thank him when he comes this afternoon."

"How do you know it's a *him?*" he inquires, sharply.

"Well, of course, it may be a lady, but we know so few ladies!"

This was very true; the female visitors at Lebanon Lodge were not numerous, nor were any of them likely to have sent bridal flowers (for that was the view of them Mr. Tremenhere had taken) to Grace; they had a wholesome fear of her father, and would have been careful not to put such things (as matrimony) into his daughter's head.

"It must be some gentleman friend of yours, papa," continued the girl; "you have so many friends."

"Have I?" he said, with a queer smile.

"Well, of course; have I not seen them? Shall I not see them to-day? men of the highest rank, some of them, and all (under pretence of saying 'Many happy returns' to poor little me) coming to do you honor."

"You think that, do you, little one?" he answered, taking her small hand in his, and speaking with gentle gravity.

"Think it? I *know* it. Have you not told me yourself how you have helped this, that, and the other in their difficulties? And have I not seen with my own eyes how grateful they are to you? I am

no longer a child, papa, though I believe you think so; and I know very well that though of course we are very rich—"

"What! you are rich, are you?" he interrupted.

"Well, of course; that is, *you* are, which is the same thing. Agnes and Philippa always say we are very rich."

"They do, do they?" He smoked at his cigar in rapid puffs—a sign, as she well knew, that he was displeased.

"Is it wrong, then? or right for them and wrong for me to say so, papa? I am very sorry. They are much older, of course—"

"Tut, tut! They are not much wiser, at all events," he put in, kindly. "Yes, you are quite right in supposing that your position is as good as theirs. Like them, you are my daughter, though there the likeness ends. You have not offended me at all, little one. It is highly improper that there should be a tear in your pretty eyes on your birthday; let me kiss it away. You were saying that though we are so rich, something happens or does not happen, which was it?"

"But perhaps I ought not to have said anything about it, papa?"

"Yes, you ought; I like to hear my Fairy talk just as she feels, just as she thinks."

"Well, then, I was thinking that other people—Mr. Abraham, for instance, and Mr. Isaacs—who are almost as rich as you are, do not have the same friends, neither so many nor such great ones as you have. Miss Abraham does not know a single lord, she says, except one, who is unhappily obliged to live abroad."

"Very likely," said Mr. Tremenhere, with a smile—this time a humorous one. "Well, and we know a dozen or so of these noble personages, don't we, Grace? And you wonder how that comes about?"

"No, I don't wonder, papa, because I *know*," she answered, gravely. "It is because you have been so generous to them, and helped them out of all their troubles. How nice it must be to be so good and kind, and also so powerful! It is easy enough to wish to do good. I can get that far myself; but I am not a fairy, though you call me so. Now, you are like one of those nice enchanters that one reads of in the Eastern tale, who makes it his business to undo the work of wicked magicians, and protect the weak against the strong."

"I am, am I?" Josh had taken his cigar from between his lips with one hand, and was covering his mouth with the other; there was something there he did not wish his child to see.

"Well, of course you are; everybody knows it. Mr. Roscoe said, when I was talking to him about you the other day, that you are just as kind to animals, since he has often seen you help a lame dog over a stile. But, now that I have shown you my flowers, I must go and dress, dear papa, before the company come; there is just time to give you a kiss before your cigar goes out for want of puffing;" and she kissed him and tripped away.

Mr. Tremenhere was very stout; he was a large man from many points of view, and there were no wrinkles in his fair fat face, but it had suddenly become very gray and worn. On his brow, too, there now sat a heavy frown. His little daughter, who was all truth and trust—the only human being he knew of whom he could say as much—believed him to be a disinterested and kindly man. He knew a good deal about getting money under false pretences, but this acquisition of tender regard—a young girl's reverence—was something new and strange to him. He had imagined that, somehow or other, his little Fairy loved him for his own sake, though she had understood, however vaguely, what he was. But now it seemed that she had been all along in a Fool's Paradise. How long, he wondered, would she remain in it? It must needs be that, sooner or later, she would be undeceived; but woe to him that should wake her from her innocent dreams! Roscoe, of all the men in the world, had contrived to amuse himself with her simplicity, had he? Roscoe, his right-hand man, who knew more of his secrets than anybody, and could tell more things of him—if he had dared to presume upon that fact— But here Mr. Joseph Tremenhere's indignation became too much for him, and he rapped out an oath that would be quite unintelligible to the gentle reader. What it meant was that if the circumstance in question did happen, Mr. Edward Roscoe should learn to his cost, and with a vengeance, the difference between master and man.

CHAPTER II.

LORD CHERIBERT.

An hour later the grounds of Lebanon Lodge were filling with gay company: Ladies, mostly matrons of dark complexion and ample proportions, perhaps a trifle over-dressed; daughters of Judah, who, if they made no "tinkling with their feet," exhibited elsewhere a considerable amount of personal jewellery. Young ones also, though much fewer, were to be seen about the garden fountain and its fish-pond, full of swimming bullion, like so many Rebekahs at the well, waiting, in most cases in vain, for their Isaacs; for of Isaacs, unless old ones, there were very few. The males of the company, who far outnumbered the ladies, were professing Christians, and in most cases had no other profession—aristocrats of noble race, but who had somewhat slipped out of their order;—the Marquis of Baccarat, who was hardly seen at any social gathering, save those rare ones at Lebanon Lodge; Lord Petronel, Lord Shotover, Lord Camballo, all three of whom would have recently appeared in a court much less highly thought of than that of St. James, but for the kind interest which Mr. Tremenhere had taken in their affairs; General Saint-Gatien, once, but not very recently, of the Guards (the band of his old regiment, playing on the lawn, was by no means incited to strike up "See the Conquering Hero Comes" on recognizing him; he was associated in their minds with a piece of music of quite another kind—a march); Sir Tattenham Corner, and many other celebrities of the turf and of the Band of Green Cloth. Some of these eminent guests—for they had all achieved distinction for themselves, and, if not exactly public benefactors, had, like ill winds, blown some people good, and laid the social journalists in particular under especial obligations—were still young in years, but their appearance had lost some of the freshness of youth. They had the delicate and ascetic air of young monks of the cloister, or of too diligent students, though it had not been produced by the same means; they too, indeed, had burned the midnight oil, but not "with blinded eyesight poring over miserable books"; they had given their atten-

tion only to the books they had made themselves, which, though not published at their own expense, had cost them dearly. Their heavy eyes were sunk in their wan cheeks, and had semicircles of black under them which were not, however, to judge by the looks that were cast at them by the other sex, altogether unattractive. They were undoubtedly distinguished-looking young fellows, but to persons who were acquainted with what is confidently believed by some people to be "life," they suggested the deleterious habit of taking green curaçoa and pickled walnuts for their breakfasts. There was, however, one marked exception to them in the person of Viscount Cheribert. This nobleman was but just of age, and looked much younger (his father, Lord Morella, was not only alive, but had barely reached middle life, which, to a young man who lives on post-obits, is a very serious and expensive matter); there was no more hair on his fresh young face than on that of an Eton boy in the Lower School; his complexion was brilliant, but far from hectic — it was perfectly healthy. If teeth are injured by smoking, it must be, to judge by those of Lord Cheribert, because a little smoking, like learning, is a dangerous thing; a cigar was never out of his mouth—it was whispered that he even smoked in bed—and yet his teeth were pearls. His figure, though slight, was perfect; he was an adept in all manly games and exercises, but had devoted himself (and many a paternal acre) to piquet. He was an admirable player, but as is generally the case with games, he had met with men who played better; it was said that before he was nineteen he had lost eleven thousand pounds at it, without counting what the cards cost—which was a pretty penny—at a single sitting. One can't help admiring a young fellow who can point to such an item, though unfortunately a deficit, in his accounts as that. Josh had a genuine regard for him, independent of the gigantic losses which in his eyes surrounded this juvenile spendthrift with an auriferous halo. The great money-spinner had a tenderness for the great money-spender; the Napoleon of Finance a sort of pity for this gay young Blucher, who, though always defeated, never seemed to know that he had been beaten. More than once Josh had faced his father for him—and Lord Morella was not a pleasant man to face under such circumstances—and pleaded, though not, of course, on sentimental grounds, for his prodigal son.

Youth and good looks, especially when accompanied by good manners, weigh with every one who is not absolutely destitute of tenderness, which was by no means the case, as we know, with Mr.

Joseph Tremenhere; the interests, moreover, of the two men were (or seemed to be) identical; but what, perhaps, attached Josh to the young fellow more than all was that he perceived in him, notwithstanding his mad ways, a genuine stanchness; that though his money and he were so easily parted, Lord Cheribert was not a fool. Josh thought it just within the range of possibility—though no one else thought it—that the young man might one day become a decent member of society. Respectability was in his blood. It was true he was going to the devil (Josh's devil—Poverty) faster than any young fellow of his means had ever ridden; but there was a chance, just a chance, that he might suddenly pull up; and if he did pull up, it was Josh's opinion that it would be for good and all. He might even become another Lord Morella. To the outside world this forecast would have seemed rank folly; but Joseph Tremenhere, though utterly ignorant of book-learning, had studied the pages of human life to some purpose. "In every spendthrift," he was wont to say (though only to himself), "there lives a miser." If for one single instant Lord Cheribert could be brought to see his position (as every one else saw it)—the gulf of ruin on which he stood, and, above all, himself the laughing-stock of every knave who had helped to bring him there—Josh believed he might be saved; and if saved (of this Josh felt sure), every farthing which remained out of the wreck of his fortunes would be saved with him. Whatever was left to him he would stick to like a limpet to his rock; and whatever might accrue to him from thenceforth would be as safe as though it were in his (Mr. Tremenhere's) own strong-box.

Each guest, as he arrived, came up to his host under the cedar-tree, and said a word or two. "His little Fairy" stood by his side, and sometimes he introduced them to her, and sometimes he did not. He was not the sort of person to whom any man (who knew him) was likely to say, "You have omitted to introduce me to your daughter, Mr. Tremenhere." It was quite possible that he might presently have told him, and with much plainness of speech, why he had omitted that act of politeness.

To some he held out but a couple of fingers—difficult, but by none found impossible—to hook; to others three, to others four. When Lord Cheribert came up smiling—some called him "Lucifer, son of the morning," in allusion to his naughty ways and the freshness of his appearance—the host offered his whole hand.

"How are you, Josh?" was the familiar salutation upon the young man's lips; but at the sight of Gracie it became, "How are you,

Tremenhere?"—an alteration which other sprigs of nobility had not thought it worth their while to make.

"As well as an old man has any right to be, my lord," he said; and then, with a wave of his hand, "My daughter Grace."

"This is a very auspicious occasion, I understand," said the young fellow; "I wish you many happy returns of the day, Miss Tremenhere."

His tone was so natural and buoyant that it almost seemed as though a child was speaking to a child.

"Cheribert has the best manners and the worst morals of any man of his age in Christendom," General Saint-Gatien was wont to say, in strange forgetfulness, as regards one part of the verdict at least, of his own far-off youth.

Grace was put at her ease at once, and thanked him prettily.

"What a day for a birthday you have got!" he went on; "but then, I feel sure you deserve it. Now, my last birthday was all wind and rain; you recollect my coming of age, Tremenhere, for you were so good as to dine with me on that occasion."

"I remember it was a very wet evening," said Josh, with humorous gravity.

Lord Cheribert laughed as lightly as the fountain played. "What a charming scene this is! There are very few gardens like this in London, where the band does not seem too big for it. You like the country better than the town, of course, Miss Tremenhere?"

"Indeed I do."

"I wish I were your age," murmured his lordship, with a genuine sigh. He was only four years older than the young lady, but, on the other hand, he had spent, or at all events he owed it, £100,000 in the interval.

"Oh, but papa likes it better too," said Grace, gravely, "if one could get him to own it."

"Really? Are you so purely pastoral, Tremenhere?"

"I like my own place in Cumberland, and the fishing," said the money-lender, stiffly. He did not like to be chaffed about his pursuits just now, even ever so little, though, as a general rule, he welcomed chaff; he made grain out of it.

"And whereabouts is your Cumberland home, Miss Tremenhere?"

"Well, it is rather difficult to describe, for it is quite up among the mountains, and away from everywhere, on Halswater."

"I suppose your father wishes to keep it a dead secret," said Lord Cheribert, laughing, "as the way over the fells to Muncaster

Castle used to be kept. He has never asked *me*, at all events, to come and see him there."

"I am afraid life at Halswater Hall would not be much in your line, my lord," said the money-lender, with a gathering frown.

"Don't be hard on me before Miss Grace," said Lord Cheribert, gently. "Why need you tell her that I have no taste for the picturesque, no love for the beauties of nature, no time now for wholesome pleasures such as fishing—"

"Oh, but I am sure papa didn't mean that," interposed Grace, quickly; she felt really sorry for this innocent and bright young fellow, who imagined himself the subject of such severe reproof; "I am sure you could not help liking Halswater."

"Still your father doesn't ask me there," observed his lordship, with humorous persistence. "My dear Tremenhere, I dote on fishing."

"I was not aware of it, my lord, though I see you are fishing now," was the host's grim reply; "but it's too bright a day for catching anything, even an invitation. Grace, dear, Agnes is calling you."

"So I am not to be asked, Josh, to this country-house of yours?" said Lord Cheribert. His tone, now they were alone, had no longer its pretence of pleading; he had exchanged it for a good-natured familiarity, in which there lurked, nevertheless, a certain seriousness.

"No, my lord, you must not come to Halswater."

"Indeed! The lake is not private property, I conclude," returned the young man, with a slight flush; "the river, I suppose, is open to anglers?"

"You have asked me a question, and you have had my answer, Lord Cheribert," was the cold reply.

"Perhaps you will kindly furnish me with a map of England, Mr. Tremenhere, with the places marked in red ink which I am not to visit?"

"It is not at all impossible that at no distant date you will find the whole island marked out in that way for you, my lord," was the quiet rejoinder, "and by less friendly hands than mine."

The young man lifted his hat—not only in sign of departure; it was a trick he had on the rare occasions when the sense of his true position came over him, the instinct to remove a weight from his brow—and turned away without a word.

"Agnes, come here!" continued the money-lender.

His eldest daughter, who was still talking with Grace, at once left

her to obey his summons. She was a tall, fair woman of thirty years of age, but looked older; her features were good, and even classical, but her lips were thin and straight; her hair resembled hay, and there was not a luxuriant crop of it; her eyes were a cold blue, usually lustreless; her eyebrows so faint that through them could be discerned the "thin red line" by which the historian on a well-known occasion described the British infantry.

"What is it, papa?"

"Keep by your sister's side this afternoon, Agnes; I don't wish strangers to talk with her."

"You mean by Grace's side, I suppose?"

"Well, I suppose so," he answered, with curt contempt. "I should think Philippa was old enough to take care of herself."

It was not a pretty speech, for there was only a year or two between his eldest and his second daughter; but it was not Mr. Tremenhere's habit to make pretty speeches, except to his little Fairy.

CHAPTER III.

THE MEMORANDUM.

Among the many things that puzzled people who had the privilege of knowing the Tremenhere family—and some people who hadn't, for Josh and his affairs were much talked about—was why the two marriageable Misses Tremenhere did not take advantage of their position. Miss Agnes has been introduced to the reader, and if her personal attractions were not great, that, of course, was but of little consequence in such a matter. It is only a few men in these days who marry for a pretty face, and their intelligence is not thought very highly of.

Her sister Philippa had narrowly missed being pretty. She was not so tall as Agnes, and, indeed, rather dumpy as to figure; but her bones were better covered. I am speaking of her as she was spoken of among themselves—by her father's male acquaintances, who were much more free of speech in discussing the family than when speaking of ladies of their own class. Her black eyes were "beady," and had not much expression. She was almost good-looking enough, they said, "for a cigar shop." Of this last matter they were doubtless good judges, but they were not students of character,

and there were points in that of Miss Philippa which had escaped all but one of them. To say that three gentlemen out of four who enjoyed, or at all events possessed, Mr. Tremenhere's acquaintance would have "jumped" at the idea of marrying one of his daughters would be to give a very feeble (as well as vulgar) expression to their sentiments; but they knew that the grapes hung too high for them. Moreover, Josh stood in the way of these objects of their ambition like a *chevaux-de-frise*. It is comparatively easy to run off with an heiress; even if she is a ward of Chancery, you at least get the interest of her money—when you come out of prison; but it was well understood that whoever married one of Josh's daughters without his permission might just as well have married for love. This was hard upon the young ladies, but, unlike most of their sex, they could afford to wait. Their attractions were not dependent upon mere youth and beauty, but on solid worth. At fifty, as everybody knew, they might pick and choose for themselves—so soon as Josh's will was proved—as though they were fifteen. In the mean time, however, they remained single. Every one has his pet antipathy, and Mr. Joseph Tremenhere concentrated his scorn and hate upon the fortune-hunter. He loved his Fairy with a paternal passion of which few believed him capable, but he loved his money more, and no one had any doubt of *that* fact. There was no necessity for him to shut up his stately Agnes, or his dark-eyed Philippa, in any castle of steel guarded by dragons, for his iron will, and the thought of his will, encompassed them and kept them safe. Neither they nor their would-be suitors were under any mistake about the matter. That observation of Mr. Tremenhere's about Philippa's being old enough to take care of herself was merely a stroke of humor. He meant rather that she was wise enough to take care of herself, which his little Fairy might possibly not be. The love he had lavished on her might so far mislead her as to imagine that whatever she did would be forgiven her—even a marriage with a landless lord—a catastrophe, indeed, to be guarded against. On the other hand, Josh knew that his will would be a law to Grace in quite another sense than it was to her sisters; moreover, she was still so child-like that the thought of "such things" had not as yet so much as entered her mind; only it was well to be on the safe side from the first.

Notwithstanding that the position of affairs as regarded the two elder Misses Tremenhere was so well understood, there were plenty of butterflies to hover about them—or rather of bees, not so much in search of immediate honey as of the garnered store that would some

day accrue to them; but there was nothing of seriousness in their attentions. The only person who addressed them with any approach to familiarity was Mr. Edward Roscoe, whose intimate business relations with their father gave him that enviable privilege. When Agnes had been removed from Grace's side, this gentleman had taken her place —not demonstratively, but in a quiet, natural manner—as her body-guard. He seemed to know by intuition what would be his patron's wishes. His appearance was rather remarkable. He was of moderate height, but so very upright that one would have taken him for a tall man. He had a clean-shaven face, except for two magnificent whiskers, which were, nevertheless, kept within due limits; it was a handsome face, and, when he smiled, an attractive one, but its ordinary expression was grave and even saturnine. His complexion was swarthy, though not disagreeably so. His voice, especially when addressing a woman, was very sweet and low; but on occasion—and the occasions were frequent—it could be firm and resolute. He had an air of independence that was almost obtrusive—not at all like that of an underling, yet he was well known to be Mr. Tremenhere's jackal. It was whispered that notwithstanding the clean and workmanlike way in which the lion disposed of his bones, Mr. Roscoe was wont to find something on them for himself. His chief power lay, however, in the fact, with which every one was acquainted, that he was a friend of the family.

"Permit me, Miss Grace, to wish you many happy returns of the day, which I have not yet done by word of mouth;" and he looked significantly at the beautiful flowers which the girl now held in her hand.

"Then it *was* you who sent me these?" she said, with a grateful blush. "It was *very* kind of you, Mr. Roscoe."

"It was a great pleasure to me, but not worth speaking about, and you will oblige me by not doing so. Some persons might think it an impertinence in one in my position."

"An impertinence?"

"Well, I know *you* would not think so; but it is not every one who estimates people for themselves. I should not, for example, venture to give your sisters birthday presents, however humble ones."

"How strange! I am sure they have both a great regard for you, Mr. Roscoe," she answered, simply.

He smiled, with the least touch of bitterness. "When you grow older, Miss Grace, you will know the world better, and then I shall

keep my distance. At present, you see, I take advantage of your simplicity."

To judge by his sarcastic look as the girl cast down her eyes, one would have almost said he was really doing it. It changed, as her sister came up, to a smile of welcome.

"Well, Miss Agnes, you are to be on duty, I suppose? My post is relieved."

"I had no orders for your dismissal, Mr. Roscoe," she answered, gently.

"Then let us keep guard together by all means."

It was not a superfluous precaution. The Marquis of Baccarat was at that moment lounging up to them with his cigar. Lebanon Lodge was Holiday Hall as regarded smoking. He was slight and of small stature, to which he added an inch by high-heeled boots. He had a little strut in his walk, which gave him a resemblance to a pigeon—and indeed a pigeon he was, though almost plucked. To save him the trouble of keeping his glass on his eye, it was screwed into his hat—a device not so inconvenient as it appeared, since he really could see equally well whether his hat was on or off.

"How are you, Miss Tremenhere?" he lisped. "Let me congratulate you upon the great success of your garden-party. Everybody is raving about it."

Though he addressed himself to Agnes, his impudent eyes were fixed upon her younger sister, who, however, took no notice of him. She was still rapt, or seemed to be so, in admiration of her flowers, and talked in an undertone with their donor.

"It is not *my* garden-party, my lord," said Agnes. She had meant to add, "it is my sister's," but a glance from Mr. Roscoe made her pause.

"Well, I suppose not, in one sense," squeaked the marquis; his voice, when irritated, was like that of a sucking-pig. "But as to the founder of the feast, your father, so humble an individual as myself cannot get at him even to say a word of congratulation. His cedar-tree yonder is quite a hall of audience."

"Sir Tattenham has left Mr. Tremenhere now, my lord," observed Mr. Roscoe, dryly, "if you have anything to say to him;" and as he spoke he interposed himself by a natural movement between Grace and the new-comer. The little lord sheered off, hurling a broadside of invective—so far as looks could do it—upon this faithful sentinel, who remained utterly unmoved.

"A worthless creature, but not dangerous," he murmured in the

elder sister's ear. Agnes nodded adhesion; his lordship's indifference to her charms had been marked enough to arouse any woman's indignation.

"Why does papa invite such people?" she returned, in the same low tones.

"My dear Miss Agnes, he is a marquis!" said Mr. Roscoe. His most winning smile sat on the speaker's lips as he uttered these words of pretended reproof, and her face reflected the smile. To a keen observer it would have almost seemed to say, "Your views are mine; for my part, as you should know, I prefer a man to a marquis."

Mr. Roscoe's tone to Grace had been more tender, but less confidential, than his manner to her sister; they seemed to have a mutual understanding.

"Philippa, on the other hand, loves a lord," said Agnes, more in pursuance of her own train of reflection than suggested by the fact that her sister was approaching them in company with Lord Cheribert.

"I am afraid so," laughed Mr. Roscoe.

> "E'en Irish peers, could she but tag 'em,
> With lord and duke 'twere sweet to call;
> And, at a pinch, Lord Bally-raggem
> Was better than no lord at all."

Lord Morella was in the Irish Peerage.

Lord Cheribert, with his bright fresh smile, shook hands with Agnes, and also with Mr. Roscoe. The latter gentleman, unsoftened by that affability, obstructed, as before, the young man's view of the more attractive object in the background; he did not understand that he was "on the free list," and had already been introduced to Grace by Mr. Tremenhere.

"Papa has been telling Grace, Lord Cheribert informs me," said Philippa, "that we are going to Halswater early in the autumn."

Mr. Roscoe withdrew from his obnoxious position with the swiftness of a magic-lantern slide, and Agnes clapped her hands. "I am so glad!" she cried.

"So you, too, like your father, are a lover of the country, are you?" said his lordship, so precipitately that it cut off the expression of astonishment that had risen to Grace's lips. She had no recollection of her father's having made any such statement, but it did not now seem worth while to dispute it. Agnes was already eloquent

upon the pleasures of life at the Lakes. Lord Cheribert listened to her with apparent interest.

"You are as Arcadian as Miss Philippa, it seems," he said. "I am, alas, only a Burlington Arcadian, but I hope some day to mend my ways. Why does Mr. Roscoe smile like that, I wonder?" His tone was good-humored, but, to the ear which it addressed, had a certain severity. There were more reckless men than Lord Cheribert in the "gilded pale" of Lebanon Lodge that afternoon, but no one with whom it was more imprudent to take a liberty.

"I was not aware that I was smiling, my lord," said Mr. Roscoe; and he spoke the truth.

"That is the worst of having too sweet a disposition," returned his lordship, dryly. "So both you young ladies fish, do you? Does Miss Grace also fish?" And he turned his pleasant face to her for the first time.

"No, Lord Cheribert, I do not fish. I think it's cruel."

"Really! I thought they had a cartilage, a something expressly given them, so that the hook should not hurt them."

"But there is the live bait."

"To be sure; I had forgotten that. They don't sell it in the Arcade, you see."

"I don't think you are quite so ignorant as you pretend to be," laughed Grace.

"Well, that's kinder than Miss Philippa, at all events, who made the same remark just now about my innocence. But I am really like a child in this matter—and a good child, too, for I know nothing of the rod. I was in hopes that some of you young ladies would teach me how to catch trout. I only know one way: when the stream is very dry, to cut what water there is off and leave them stranded."

"Not a very sportsmanlike proceeding, I must say," observed Agnes, smiling.

"Never laugh at the ignorant or the poor, and I am both," said Lord Cheribert, reprovingly. "What I want is teaching."

"Well, if you come to Halswater," said Agnes, "Philippa and I will teach you to throw a fly."

"Thanks; that's a bargain. And what will *you* teach me, Miss Grace?"

"I? Nothing. I have everything—so everybody tells me—to learn."

"Then everybody doesn't tell the truth. Come, you must do

something when you are in the country, or else, like me, you would feel tempted there to commit *felo-de-se*."

"No, I do nothing; I only wander over the hills and far away."

"Then you must know your way about."

"Not a dalesman of the dales, not a cragsman of the fells, I flatter myself, knows it better," said Grace, with conscious pride.

"Thanks; that's another bargain. I'll put it down in my little book at once." And here he produced his betting-book, a duodecimo volume he had bought for little, but which had cost him much.

"*Mem.*—September, to learn how to fish from Miss Agnes and Miss Philippa Tremenhere; to learn 'my way about' from Miss Grace."

"But I never promised to teach you," she remonstrated.

"But you did not say you wouldn't, and you looked as if you would," he replied, gayly. "Your excellent father is coming this way, doubtless to ask me to Halswater; but *his* invitation is now superfluous. I shall be there." He smiled, nodded instead of taking his hat off, but very pleasantly, and was gone. It was very cool of him, of course, but his manner robbed his nod of any impertinence. It was said of Lord Cheribet by his detractors, who, after all, were few, that he owed much of his personal popularity to the exercise of a certain "agreeable insolence." It was not, however, really insolence, but only the perfectly natural manner of a very kindly young fellow who was always accustomed to have his own way.

CHAPTER IV.

A SUSPICION.

Lord Cheribert was in error in supposing, or at least asserting, that Mr. Tremenhere had come up to the little party, like a dove with the olive-branch, with an invitation for him to Halswater in his mouth. If that gentleman looked like a dove at all, it was one whose feathers have been very much ruffled; his appearance was more like that of an angry hen who sees her pet chicken endangered by the attentions of a hawk in chick's feathers. Of the hawk proper, with beak and claw highly developed, it was evident he stood in no fear, or he would not have brought General Saint-Gatien with him, unless, indeed, his haste was such that it did not admit of his getting rid of that gallant officer, with whom he had been conversing under the

cedar-tree. The general was a tall, hairy man, with a sinister expression, and but for his great height, which seemed to unfit him for naval evolutions, less resembled a soldier than a buccaneer. As he took off his hat with a sweep to the ladies, he looked as if he would have liked to buy all three of them—the youngest for choice—and had forgotten for the moment that he had not the money.

"The three Graces," he said, "upon my life, in the Garden of Eden."

The mythology, perhaps, was a little mixed, but that the general thought he had paid a pretty and acceptable compliment was certain, by the way in which he smiled and drew out his waxed mustaches—a sure sign of self-satisfaction with him.

"Our Eden is not without a serpent, however," replied Miss Philippa, who had a ready tongue, and was not the least afraid of this warrior, "for I have seen him."

"Indeed!" he said, with a flush upon his swarthy face.

"Don't be afraid, general," she added, with a light laugh; "I meant nothing personal. It was only a musical instrument; they have a serpent in your band."

"You're too clever for me, Miss Philippa," he answered, frowning. There were reasons, though she did not know them, why allusions to his old regiment were displeasing to him.

"What was Cheribert so eloquent to you about just now? You didn't make fun of *him*, I'll warrant."

Philippa was about to make some jesting reply, when she noticed that her father, who was speaking to Mr. Roscoe, had suddenly paused as if to listen to her.

"He was enlightening us upon sporting matters."

"No doubt he fancies himself immensely in his own colors, but mark my words, he'll break his neck some day."

Grace looked up quickly, with an ejaculation of dismay.

"Yes," pursued the general, ruthlessly, "I would recommend no young lady to set her affections upon Cheribert till he has learned to ride or given up steeple-chasing."

"He *has* given it up," observed Mr. Tremenhere.

"Not a bit of it, my good fellow; he only said he was thinking of giving it up. You're a better judge of what his thoughts are worth than I am, and doubtless have persuaders for him as sharp as his spurs; but I'll back his obstinacy, though I wouldn't back his horse. He's booked for the Everdale, at all events, and it's a stiffish course."

"Indeed!" replied Mr. Tremenhere, indifferently. But the news was in reality displeasing to him. There were certain arrangements of great importance to him, which, "if anything should happen" to Lord Cheribert, would turn out very disastrously; and though his business operations were often of a most speculative kind, he resented their being made unnecessarily so. He had two mottoes: one was "Push" (which he pronounced like "rush"), and the other, "No risks, as the goose said when she stooped under the barn door." It might be said of him that he was much less like a goose than a fox; but he was quite as anxious as that prudent bird not to knock his head, and also that other people in whom he had a pecuniary interest should not knock *their* heads—against a stone wall in a steeplechase, for example. He even mechanically cast an uneasy glance at Mr. Roscoe, as though he would say, "Do you hear that?" to which, however, that gentleman, who was in earnest conversation with "his little Fairy," gave no response.

They were bending over those white flowers together, the arrival of which had already given Mr. Tremenhere some discomposure.

"General, an idea has just struck me," he exclaimed, suddenly; "I think I see my way out of that business about which we were talking together just now."

"And do you see *my* way?" returned the general, pertinently.

"I think so;" and he thrust his stout arm through that of his astonished guest and led him away.

The two elder sisters looked at one another significantly.

"Papa is very angry," said Philippa, in a low tone.

"There is no need to tell me that, since I know papa as well as you do," was the dry reply.

"I suppose it's about Lord Cheribert. I could not help bringing him with me; he asked me to bring him. It is so difficult, somehow, to refuse him anything."

Agnes did not answer; her attention seemed to be distracted by what was going on between Mr. Roscoe and Grace. Philippa observed this, and a strange expression flitted across her face; it had displeasure in it, and also a certain cruelty.

"After all," she said, "it is not surprising that Grace should have taken his fancy."

"Whose fancy?" inquired Agnes, sharply, the little color she possessed suddenly deserting her cheeks.

"Well, of course, Lord Cheribert's; you did not suppose I meant

General Saint-Gatien's, surely?" There was a touch of mockery in her tone which did not escape the other's ear.

"Instead of chattering here with me, Philippa," she said, severely, "it seems to me you ought to be attending to our guests."

"Why don't you do the honors to them yourself, my dear?" returned the other; "you are the eldest."

Agnes's brow grew very black, and a gleam of anger flashed from her eyes; the tone was quiet enough, however, in which she replied, "Papa has placed me here to take charge of Grace."

Philippa laughed softly, but not sweetly, and cast a half-glance at the couple behind them. What her laugh seemed to say was, "I cannot congratulate you upon the way in which you are performing your duties." "Mr. Roscoe," she said, "I have been moved on by the police. Will you give me your escort to the refreshment-tent?"

The gentleman appealed to looked up with a quick start, and glanced at Agnes. "I am unable to oblige you, Miss Philippa," he answered, coldly; "I am under orders to remain on guard here with your sister."

It was Philippa's turn to look black now; the blood rushed to her face, she pressed her lips closely together, as if to restrain herself from speaking, and moved slowly away.

"Why did she want you to go with her?" inquired Agnes, under her breath.

"A little shy, I suppose; there are so many people about."

"Shy? You should rather say sly," said Agnes, contemptuously.

"If so," replied Mr. Roscoe, gravely, "there is only the more reason for that caution, the necessity of which I have so often ventured to impress upon you. Your father is coming back to us, Miss Grace; you have an attraction for him to-day, it seems, even greater than usual."

Mr. Tremenhere had now a lady on his arm; she was dark and plump, had hardly reached middle-age, and but for a certain coarseness of feature would have been decidedly good-looking. Her name was Linden, and she was a widow. Her dress was magnificent—indeed, a great deal too much so for a garden-party—and sparkled with jewels; but the good-nature in her eyes outshone them. Mr. Tremenhere had not many favorites among the female sex, but Mrs. Linden was one of them. It was whispered that she entertained the ambition of becoming something nearer to him than his confidential friend and domestic adviser—a circumstance that prevented her from gaining the good graces of either Agnes or Philippa.

"They are so devoted to their father," the widow used to say to her intimates, with a strange mixture of frankness and sarcasm, "that it makes them jealous of me." What she said to herself was, "They think I want his money—or what they consider *their* money—as if I had not more than I know what to do with already!" And doubtless, though they objected to her influence with their father, their opposition would have been far less keen could she have placed their minds at ease on this point. Young people can never understand why old people should want to marry, and are always quick to impute bad motives for it; but the true reason for Mrs. Linden's admiration for Mr. Tremenhere was never even guessed at by his daughters. Money, as they suspected, was at the bottom of it, but not greed. The late Mr. Linden had distinguished himself in the same profession—had been, as it were, the attorney-general among money-lenders, but Mr. Tremenhere was the lord chief-justice; she bowed down less to the golden calf than to the intelligence of the man who had built it up, though she perceived no folly in his worshipping it. The hunger for gold is at least as strong with some people as that for land, of which we have lately heard so much; and the pleasure of satisfying it, even to those who have heaps of it, is fully equal to that of earth-eating. The atmosphere Mrs. Linden had always breathed was aureate; the ground she had trodden upon was aurif-erous; her very dreams had been golden. She had been brought up all her life, as indeed had been Mr. Tremenhere, in the worship of wealth, which has a cult, just as rank and position have; only, instead of the "Peerage" and the "County Families," "plums" and "warmth" are the objects of adoration. This respectable sect place the possessors of a hundred thousand pounds, of five hundred thousand, and so on, where lords and dukes are put in the other scale. In Mrs. Linden's eyes Mr. Joseph Tremenhere was a prince of the blood, because he was said to have a million of money; if he had died worth all that, he would have seemed to her to enter into a sort of Walhalla, and she would have spoken of him ever after with a hushed reverence. But she hoped he would not die, but live to make her Mrs. Tremenhere, that she might shine by his reflected splendor. Except for that, her regard for him was as unselfish as that of any village maiden for her swain; she would not have asked for a pennyworth of settlement; and underneath all that yellow mud she had a tender heart.

"How beautiful your little Fairy is looking, dear Mr. Tremenhere!" she had been saying with genuine admiration, as, emerging

with him from the refreshment-tent, her eyes fell on the girl and her body-guard. "If I were you I should feel quite nervous at having so bright a jewel in charge."

"Grace is as good as she is pretty," said the money-lender, in a tone that was not only confident but had something of reproof in it.

"No doubt, as good as gold. But her very simplicity and ignorance of her own attractions have danger in them."

"That is true," said Mr. Tremenhere. It was even truer than she thought; he felt that it was his duty some day to point out to his little Fairy that, kind and tender as he seemed to her, he could and would be inflexible as iron in certain circumstances; on an occasion too, perhaps, when she might have expected him to be soft as wax; but he shrank from showing her a side of his character which, though so often turned to others, she had never beheld.

"You are a woman, and have keen eyes," he continued, gravely; "do you suspect danger—I mean from any particular quarter?"

"I would rather not answer that question, Mr. Tremenhere."

"But I insist upon it, Mrs. Linden; my child has no mother."

"That is an appeal I cannot resist," she interrupted, hastily; "but I am no meddler, and hate to make mischief; and, moreover, I may be quite wrong. There is also another reason which disinclines me to speak."

"Out with it! let us get that over first," he said. His manner was more brusque even than usual; it concealed an anxiety.

"Perhaps, Mr. Tremenhere, what I am about to say would not be to your taste. You have strong likings as well as prejudices. I do not wish to suffer in your opinion by going counter to one of them."

"You shall not suffer; even if you are wrong, I shall be your debtor, Mrs. Linden. Who is it you suspect?"

"I suspect no one; but, in my judgment, the most likely quarter for danger to Grace to come from is the one in which you have placed most confidence."

"He dares not," replied, Mr. Tremenhere, in low, hoarse tones. It was unnecessary to mention names, for his own eyes, and those of his companion, were fixed, while they were speaking, upon the man in question. He was standing, with smiling lip, stroking a whisker "as the rabbit fondles his own harmless face," between the two ladies, and making himself agreeable, as it seemed to both of them.

"There is nothing, in my opinion, that he dares not do," was Mrs. Linden's quiet rejoinder. "His will is as strong as yours, and he is very subtle."

"You are right so far, but you do not understand how well he understands *me*. Moreover, if what you imagine were the fact, Agnes, who is as sharp-eyed as yourself, would not fail to discover it."

There was a reply on Mrs. Linden's lips, which, if expressed, would have surprised her companion very much; but it never passed them.

"Agnes suspects nothing because she deems her sister still a child," she answered, after a moment's pause. "That very circumstance, however, may be to Grace's disadvantage. She may come under his influence without knowing it, and the knowledge may come too late."

It would have been impossible to guess from Mr. Tremenhere's face that the suspicion of this very thing had already occurred to him, and that not an hour ago; but he nodded, and jerked his hand out in a manner that informed Mrs. Linden, who had studied his sign language to some purpose, that what she had said to him had had its weight, and would be attended to. His anger, however, must have been great, since even the presence of his little Fairy did not prevent his addressing his subordinate, when he came up with him, in the harshest tone.

"What are you hanging about here for, Roscoe, instead of making yourself useful about the place?"

Mr. Roscoe looked quite unmoved, and, as Agnes knew, was perfectly well able to answer for himself under much more trying circumstances, but to have him thus spoken to in the hearing of Mrs. Linden was unendurable to her.

"If there is any one to blame," she interposed, "blame me, for it was at my request that Mr. Roscoe kept us company."

It was the first time she had ever evinced to her father the smallest interest in that gentleman, and she regretted the speech the instant she had uttered it.

Mr. Tremenhere, however, did not appear displeased, and seemed even mollified by it. His suspicions had taken another direction, and were monopolized by another object.

"In that case," he said, coldly, "I will take Mr. Roscoe's place;" and so saying, he dismissed him with a wave of his hand.

Mrs. Linden dowered Agnes with a smile of such quiet significance as that young lady would have liked to recompense by strangling her on the spot.

Even in the richest households there are drawbacks to perfect happiness, and there was more than one skeleton in the closet at Lebanon Lodge, the existence of which it was highly desirable should not be suspected by an outsider.

CHAPTER V.

THE WARNING.

It was Mr. Tremenhere's custom, when the labors of each day were over, to write down the result of them in a certain ledger, furnished with great locks, like a prison door, in company with his faithful assistant, Mr. Roscoe. The place of meeting of these two recording angels was a small upper room (such as could not be spied upon), furnished like a bank parlor, and in which more money (in paper) was wont nightly to change hands than in the saloons of Monaco, and with a much greater percentage in favor of "the table." Even when there had been but little business done, they would still meet together and concert benevolent schemes for getting this and that poor fellow out of his difficulties, and also for recompensing themselves for their trouble in the matter. It was not done in the prim, stiff way in which affairs are sometimes conducted in the city, but over cigars and brandy and soda; and these discussions, especially so far as Josh was concerned, were carried on with much dramatic force and freedom from convention. These two spiders, working in the same web, were in strong contrast to each other; the one somewhat bloated and unwieldy, but uncommonly deft and keen, and the other lank and agile, and quick to supply a thread where it was wanted, and the gluten to fix it.

Even after the birthday party at Lebanon Lodge they met as usual, though a trifle later; for because a day had been spent in conviviality, it by no means followed with these diligent workers that no "operation" had been effected. From the flower Pleasure it was quite as much their habit to pluck the blossom Business as from the more ordinary sources; the nettle Danger was more often bound up in it in that case than usual, and required their more particular attention.

Mr. Tremenhere's face was graver to-night than customary, and had even a sullen look, which, to do him justice, it rarely wore. If he was not the best-mannered man that ever picked pocket, as some eulogist described him, who knew perhaps more of pick-pocketing than of manners, he was of a much more genial nature than could be

expected from any one in his line of business; he had his likings, not altogether misplaced, and was always more willing to do a kindness that cost him nothing than an injury. He was not an honorable man, of course; there were legal authorities of high standing who had pronounced him dishonest; but he was not one of your mean and miserly money-lenders. His huge fortune had not been built up by scraping and paring; it was even said that from bones on which he had found unexpected pickings he had sometimes taken less than he might have done, though that idea perhaps owed its origin to the love of romance which, I am thankful to say, pervades every section of society. But he liked his comforts, and never allowed himself to be put out by a small thing. Yet it was a small thing, as Mr. Roscoe thought, that had put his companion out to-night, and, as his custom was, he at once grappled with it. His own marvellous power of intuition was one of the things, as he well knew, for which his lord and master valued him; and he never shrank, as a mere subordinate would have done, from treading on a tender place, or hinting that the other had here and there been less sagacious in his proceedings than became him.

"General Saint-Gatien tells me that you are going to let him have that money," he observed, quietly, as he lit his cigar.

Even in his talks with his patron Mr. Roscoe always gave his clients their full title, whereas Josh was terribly at his ease in Zion, and would speak of persons of the highest position with the most shocking familiarity.

"Of course you know best" (a phrase he never used unless he was quite sure the other was in the wrong), "but, in my opinion, the general is a squeezed lemon."

Mr. Tremenhere threw out his hand in his contemptuous fashion.

"D——n Saint-Gatien!" he said; "I'm going to have a word or two with *you!*"

Roscoe had a command over his features which would have fitted him for a diplomatist or a poker-player of the highest order; but, though he raised his eyebrows and looked up in his companion's face with well-affected surprise, he felt the telltale color in his cheeks as he did so.

"If you are deceiving me, Edward Roscoe," continued Mr. Tremenhere, speaking with a sternness that was almost savage in its intensity, and gazing at him with angry eyes, "it will be the worst piece of work you ever did for yourself—by Heaven, it will!"

"Deceiving you, Mr. Tremenhere!" His tone was one of sheer

amazement, but still the telltale blood would not be kept down, but rose and rose till it sang "traitor" in his very ears.

"Have I taken you from the gutter, I wonder, and clothed and taught and fed you, only that you should turn like an ungrateful cur, and snap at my hand?—for you cannot bite me, sir, you cannot *bite* me. *No!*"

The speaker's excitement was extreme, and made the greater impression on his companion, because such a state of mind in his patron was without a precedent. The fear which filled Mr. Roscoe's mind was also as great a stranger there. He had secrets of his own —and damaging ones—but if all of them (save one) had been discovered, he would have met his accusers with a front of brass. The question that stirred his scheming soul to its muddy depths was, "Had that *one* been discovered?" No! if it had been, he would have been by this time in the street, with Mr. Tremenhere's door closed forever behind him; but, nevertheless, it might be suspected; nothing less, he felt, than such a suspicion could have moved his patron thus.

"I don't know what you mean, Mr. Tremenhere; I cannot defend myself, since you are striking me in the dark. I only know that you are doing me a grievous wrong."

"It may be so—I hope it is, for your sake, not for mine, sir; be sure of that. I say again, it does not lie within the power of man to hurt me; I have no weak point—none."

His appearance physically was not corroborative of this statement. His huge and flabby frame shook from head to foot; his eyes were bloodshot; and on his forehead there was a ghastly dew. Under circumstances less affecting his own vital interests Mr. Roscoe would have been seriously alarmed for his patron; but for the moment it behooved him to look to himself alone, and be armed at all points, though indeed, if the stroke he awaited should be that he had in his mind, even his ready skill and buckler of bull's-hide would little avail him.

"I am here to ask you nothing," continued the money-lender after a long pause; "for, if you are guilty, I know I should only meet with lies."

It was not a complimentary observation, but, to the person addressed, it gave more satisfaction than under other circumstances any eulogy could have done. He uttered a silent sigh of relief, and bowed his head with Eastern humility—behavior so foreign to his character that if his companion had not been blinded with passion it might have itself betrayed him.

"I am here, Edward Roscoe, to warn you for the first time and the last. You think yourself my right hand, and I do not deny your use; you trade on it, I know, and I don't blame you; you have lived on the crumbs that have fallen from my table, and grown fat upon them; let that content you. Beware of interfering between me and mine!"

"Then it *is* so," was the other's inward thought; "he *does* suspect it." He dared not meet his patron's eye, but, looking critically at his cigar (which was natural enough, since it had gone out, but that he did not notice), replied deferentially, "I have no remembrance of ever having done so, Mr. Tremenhere."

"Knowing me as you do," continued the money-lender, without paying any attention to this disclaimer, "you are aware, I suppose, that if any one of those men who were in this house to-day, men of rank and birth, and some of them not without expectations, which no one knows better than myself how to realize, was to ask one of my daughters in marriage, what sort of answer he would get from me?"

"I know that he might just as well ask for the moon," replied the other, dryly.

"And if, notwithstanding that reply, he should put his design into execution, and persuade the silly girl to marry him, you know too what would happen then?"

"Nothing would happen," returned Mr. Roscoe, forcing a smile, "except that he would have found a wife. She would not, as I can well believe, be the heiress he had looked for."

"Heiress!" hissed the money-lender; "while I lived she would not have a penny, and when I was dead she would have a shilling, just a shilling, to show that I had not forgotten her."

"Indeed, sir, I think it very probable."

"Probable? It would most certainly happen. My money shall never, *never*"—here he struck the table with his large, nerveless hand, as a fish-monger smites his slab with a flatfish—"feed the insatiable maw of any spendthrift—no, not if he could make my girl a duchess. Do you think, then, it is likely that a low-born schemer, who, notwithstanding his shrewd wits, and contempt for ne'er-do-wells, himself runs risks I *know*, and looks to become wealthy in a moment by a lucky stroke on 'change, would have a better chance of enriching himself by the same means at my expense?"

Such an insult might have brought the blood to any man's cheek, but it was not the insult that turned that of him to whom it was addressed to crimson.

"Such a character as you describe, Mr. Tremenhere," he answered, quietly, "would have most certainly no chance at all."

"You are right. Lay your own words to heart and profit by them. Stop!"—for the other was about to speak—"there is one thing more. Notwithstanding the conviction you have expressed, it is possible that you may entertain an illusion. You may think—though you ought to know me better—that, notwithstanding what I have said on this matter, and how fully purposed I am in my own mind about it, there is a weak point through which you may reach my heart and gain your ends. 'There is his little Fairy,' you may be saying to yourself, 'who is dearer to him than all his wealth, and whom he would never doom to—what he most despises and detests himself—a life of poverty. If I could wind myself into her affection, and secure her for my own, he would forgive her, though he would never forgive *me*. Sooner or later he would come to terms; on his death-bed at least he would send for her, and say, "You are my daughter still;" ' if you are thinking *that*, Edward Roscoe, you are in a Fool's Paradise indeed."

While his patron was thus speaking, the flush had gradually left the other's cheek; a certain rigidity of limb, caused by some extreme tension of the nerves, had also disappeared; except that he experienced a sense of relief instead of pain, he was like a man who recovers from a fainting fit, and, though not unconscious of a danger narrowly escaped, begins to feel himself again.

"Mr. Tremenhere," he replied, in a tone more grave than ordinary, but without a trace of his recent humility, "you amaze me. I say nothing of the infamy that is presupposed in the monstrous offence which you would by implication impute to me, except that it is of so vile a character that, even with your low opinion of human nature, I feel confident it did not originate in your own mind. None but a woman who had her own ends to serve could have conceived it."

"Never you mind how it got there," answered the other, curtly. "It *is* there."

"I see it is; I see that your mind has been poisoned against me. Let it be so. Think anything of me that you please. Let me be as base and faithless to the trust you have placed in me as malice can paint. But, remember, in so doing you impute ingratitude and disobedience to one whom you *know* to be incapable of such offences—an innocent and loving child."

"Pooh, pooh!" answered the other, contemptuously. "None of

your heroics, sir. Of course she is innocent, but she is no longer a child. You sent her flowers to-day."

"Her birthday! Even if I had sent her diamonds, it would have been no such matter. I should not have dreamed of your objecting to it. She has been 'Grace' to me ever since I have known her; but henceforward she shall be 'Miss Grace,' like her sisters. You were kind enough to say just now that anything I might allege in my own defence—against a charge of which I knew nothing, and as little expected it to be *this* as one of arson—would probably be lies. Ask, then, Miss Grace herself what I have said to her, how I have behaved to her, so long as she can remember. That I have not been truthful to her may be justly urged against me; but did you wish me to be truthful to her? When she asked her simple, ignorant questions about her father's calling—"

"Be silent, sir," interrupted the money-lender, savagely, "and let my Grace alone!"

"As you please, Mr. Tremenhere, though it seems hard that a man's mouth should be closed on the very matter which would establish his innocence. However, since that is forbidden ground, and also as it seems you think me knave enough for anything, the only line of defence that is left me is to plead that, if guilty, I am not responsible for my actions. If I have entertained such a project as has been suggested by you, I must certainly be stark staring mad. I put aside the fact that I am double the young lady's age, and totally unfitted by my position to induce her (if the subject of matrimony has ever entered her mind, which I do not believe) to waste a thought on me; I only urge this argument that, since I have been your confidential clerk for many years, I know something of your character; and what I have gathered from my study of it is that, so far from your affection for your youngest daughter being likely to mitigate in your eye any such act of folly and disobedience on her part, it would add fuel to fire. You are not a man to be crossed in anything on which you have set your mind; but where you have set your *heart*, opposition, if I read you aright, would turn it from stone to steel. Knave let me be, if it is your pleasure to consider me such; but, whether blinded by your own passion or hoodwinked by another, I cannot believe that you have been brought to think Edward Roscoe a born fool."

These words flowed with a force and earnestness that, if they were feigned, would have proved the speaker to be a consummate actor indeed: the expression of his face, as he stood steadily con-

fronting the other, was almost contemptuous in its defiant confidence; his air had lost all its habitual secretiveness and reserve, and manifested, what had probably never been seen in it before, an honest indignation.

"It may be as you say, sir; I hope it is," was the cold rejoinder. "I have made no accusation against you, and I do not regret my word of warning. I have done."

These last words were uttered thickly and indistinctly, and had a terrible significance for the ear that heard them. The speaker's face had turned purple, and had a look in it which agitated his companion with a strange mixture of hope and fear.

"You are not well, Mr. Tremenhere?"

A sharp and bitter cry broke from the lips of the money-lender as he sank backward in his chair.

In a moment Roscoe was at his side, unloosing his neck-cloth. It was an involuntary action, and, after he had performed it, he remained motionless as a statue; his eye mechanically sought the bottle of brandy, but his hand did not move towards it. He stood watching his master like a dog (but with no such faithful or anxious look), and with his ear on the stretch for any external sound. Would that scream have roused the house, he was wondering, or had no one heard it? Presently the money-lender opened his eyes. "Brandy!" he gasped. With steady hand the other poured out a glassful and gave it him, like medicine to a child. The stimulant revived him.

"Tell no one of this," he murmured. Roscoe inclined his head.

"If I had not thought such would have been your wish," he answered, gently, "I should have called assistance."

"You did quite right—another!"

"I am afraid you have been in great pain, sir," said the other, as he obeyed him.

"Pain doesn't express it; it was torture—agony."

"For the moment you lost your breath, I fear."

"It was not breathlessness; it was annihilation."

He felt for his handkerchief and wiped his forehead.

"That was the dew of death, Roscoe. But for you"—he had caught sight of the neck-cloth on his knee—"I should have been gone. I shall not forget it."

"You make much of a trifle, Mr. Tremenhere."

"A trifle, you call it! By George! let me tell you, it was touch and go."

There was no occasion to tell Mr. Roscoe that. He was fully conscious of the serious nature of his companion's seizure, and also that, for the time at least, there was no further danger to be apprehended from it. The money-lender's face had assumed its normal complexion—not a particularly wholesome one, it is true, but with no resemblance, such as it had so lately worn, to that of a man half strangled; it was curious, too, how, with returning life, his old manner of speech had been resumed, which, but now, in view of the Beckoning Hand, had been so apprehensively grave.

"Yes, you've had your warning, and I've had mine, the same evening," he continued, grimly; "but mine was a real notice to quit. What fools we are, even the sharpest of us!" he added, in a low voice.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Tremenhere; I did not catch what you were saying."

"Never mind; it was not worth catching. Now I shall do." And he looked towards his bedroom door, which communicated with the sitting-room.

"I don't think you ought to be left, sir," returned the other; "it will be no inconvenience to me to sleep here on the sofa, so as to hear you if you called."

The words were couched in dry mechanical tones, little in accordance with the sympathy they suggested, and the speaker kept his eyes upon the floor as he uttered them. Perhaps it was some sense of shortcoming in his manner, or even some expression in that downcast face, which the other was regarding very sharply, that caused Mr. Tremenhere to decline this offer, and without thanks.

"No, no, I shall be better alone," he said, with abrupt decision. "Good-night!"

"Very good." Mr. Roscoe lit his candle and left the room. His patron listened for a moment as though to make sure the other had gone away, then moved to the door, and softly locked and bolted it.

"My nerves are thoroughly upset," he muttered to himself. "What could he hope to get by murdering me? That woman was wrong, too, I'm pretty sure, about his having any designs on Grace; still he might have had, and in that case, if I had died to-night—well, there shall be no more risks; to-morrow it shall be done." There was a large bookcase in the room, filled mostly with legal works, and on the top shelf an encyclopædia in many volumes; he took down volume one and turned to a certain article. "This disease," it said, "is characterized by intense pain and sense of con-

striction; the paroxysms begin with the breastbone and extend to the shoulder. The fits recur, and the patient dies in one of them." "I thought so." He put the book back carefully in its place, and reseated himself in his chair. "I must not allow myself, it seems, to be put out by things as I was to-day. There will be no occasion to be put out when one has guarded against all possible consequences. And in the mean time nothing shall disturb me." Nevertheless, though there was no recurrence of his malady, Mr. Tremenhere was a good deal disturbed that night. His sleep was broken, and once, an hour or two after he had retired to rest, he thought he heard the handle of his sitting-room door turned; but that, no doubt, as he assured himself, was fancy. With the morning light he was almost himself again; the impression of what he had suffered was still upon him, but greatly weakened; and though he was no less determined to put into effect the resolution he had formed the previous night, there seemed no such pressing occasion for it. That information in the encyclopædia was doubtless correct enough, but it might not apply to him. Since doubt, however, had become a factor in his case, there were two things to be done instead of one.

CHAPTER VI.

AN HONEST LAWYER.

The difference between the probability and the certainty of death, however slight in degree, is very marked as regards the feelings of him who is threatened with it. Even in a "forlorn-hope" there is still a hope of life, and if there were none at all, there would be a great falling off in the number of volunteers. There are more people in the world, indeed, who wish to die than is commonly supposed, but still they are not numerous, and Mr. Joseph Tremenhere was certainly not among them. He had none of the fears that agitated Hamlet as regards the future; though his motto of "No risks" was not perhaps utterly lost sight of even in that matter; but, on the whole, he was well content with this sublunary sphere, and he had a characteristic objection to exchange it for nothing—which was the alternative that he looked forward to.

After breakfast, on the morning after his "shaking" (as he now called it to himself), instead of sitting in his parlor as usual awaiting

the bright-winged flies of pleasure, he left his assistant to entertain them, and took his way on foot to the house of a well-known physician. It was not his own doctor, though he had great confidence in that gentleman, and made use of him in a manner very unusual; sent him a much larger crop of patients than generally arises from the seed of individual gratitude, and took an interest in their well-being, which, but for its close connection with finance, would have stamped him as a philanthropist. But though he had many secrets in common with him, he did not wish to make him the depositary of his present apprehensions about himself. He preferred to consult a stranger. This resolve had its inconveniences; for he might have to wait his turn for admission, and waiting—where he was paying for it instead of being paid—did not at all suit with Mr. Tremenhere's humor. Who of us is so fortunate as not to be acquainted with that grim antechamber (the same all the world over) in which we await our summons to the (medical) hall of doom? When not used for its present purpose, it is a dining-room, but anything less suggestive of conviviality it is difficult to imagine. Will dainty dishes really in due course supply the place of those mouldy books and long-dead periodicals that lie on that funereal table? Will these miserable fellow-creatures that surround us, dyspeptic, pale, and silent, be succeeded by jovial guests? It seems impossible. Why do they look at each one as he enters with such serious disfavor, as if their chances of life were diminished by any addition to their numbers? It is because they believe that he has, like themselves, given a shilling to the butler to call him before his turn. In Josh's case they were wrong; for he had bribed the man with half a crown.

"Mr. Tremenhere, *by appointment*," were the words that dropped with due solemnity from the lips of that discreet serving-man the very next time he opened the door. It was even more improper in the patient than in the butler, but it should be charitably remembered that the encyclopædia had warned him to avoid all mental emotions, such as impatience, and "having to wait" was therefore bad for him. If those he had wronged could have seen Mr. Tremenhere's face when he emerged from his interview with the doctor, they would have had their revenge. He had gone in with the expectation of hearing bad news, but not with the certainty of it; he came out with the words of doom ringing in his ears. He had asked for the truth, in his plain-spoken way, and the truth had been told him. The doctor, knowing who he was, had taken an unusual

interest in him; a wise doctor always does in such cases; human nature is almost as much his study as anatomy. This interest is quite independent of sympathy, or even pity. "There is nothing so beautiful as a beautiful skin—except a skin disease," said an enthusiastic surgeon; and virtue is always a less attractive subject for moral diagnosis than its contrary.

Sentence of death had been passed upon the great money-lender. To most people in such circumstances money would have taken a very secondary place in their reflections, but in those of Joseph Tremenhere it assumed even greater proportions than usual. There was not a moment, as it seemed to him, to be lost in putting out of the reach of harm, of guarding from greed and waste and folly, that treasure the amassing of which had been the darling object of his laborious days. If life must needs be lost, that at least should be saved, and in its entirety. The question *Cui bono*, for whose benefit it was to be saved, did not enter into his mind. The gold itself was the thing sacred to him, and required no temple to sanctify it. Curiously enough—though not so to those who are acquainted with the inconsistencies of human nature—Mr. Tremenhere, despite the fancy value that he placed upon his riches, had not yet made his will. The folly of such an omission had never struck him till last night, and that soliloquy of his, "What fools we are, even the sharpest of us!" had referred to it. But *now* he felt that he had not only been a fool but a madman. Like one who has been living in a costly but wooden house, which constitutes his whole property, and suddenly remembers, "I am not insured," he stood amazed and alarmed at his own recklessness. The very idea of the risk he had run brought on another risk; his heart began to beat in an abnormal fashion; his terrified fancy pictured it as the premonitory symptom of that second "seizure" which the doctor had warned him would probably be his last. Ten thousand pounds out of his huge hoard he would have given gladly for the hours, not of respite from death, but of freedom from distracting thoughts and fears, so that he might accomplish the all-important task that lay before him with a clear brain. His ideas upon the matter—his testamentary intentions—had long been made up; but all the complex plan would go for nothing unless he could communicate it to another.

He was in the street (how he got there he did not know), holding to a lamp-post, and looking to the passer-by like a man who had been overtaken not so much by fate as by liquor. It was fortunately a very quiet thoroughfare, chiefly inhabited by doctors, and

he gradually came to himself without having attracted public attention. He called a four-wheeled cab, and drove to a solicitor's office at no great distance, and here again, as in the doctor's case, he did not choose his own solicitor. He knew more than one gentleman of that profession, and was on much more intimate terms with them than is usually the case with lawyer and client, but he knew too much of them to wish them to know so much about him as it had become necessary to disclose. Mr. Allerton was a solicitor with whom indeed he had had dealings, and of a confidential nature, but they had not been amicable dealings. He had acted for Lord Morella in connection with certain transactions which the money-lender had had with his lordship's son and heir, and had expressed himself rather strongly on Mr. Tremenhere's course of conduct. He had even gone so far as to say, in a conversation to which there were no witnesses, "It is my opinion, Mr. Tremenhere, that you are acting like a rogue in this matter."

But insinuations of that sort had never made the money-lender's heart "go"; he was too much accustomed to them; moreover, he had got the better of the lawyer in the affair in question, and could have afforded to put up with even stronger vituperation at the same price. He had a large charity under such circumstances for hasty expressions, and not only bore no malice because of them, but rather respected him who uttered them for his candor and perspicacity. There is a foolish saw about rogues believing all other men to be as roguish as themselves; but he must be a poor rogue indeed, and little likely to succeed in his calling, who entertains any such belief. There is no one who understands the advantage of genuine honesty —and in his way appreciates it—better than your clever scoundrel. He may dislike the honest man exceedingly, but if he says he despises him, he is a liar. He has in truth a much higher opinion of him than of any one in the same line of business as himself.

Mr. Allerton was what many people consider a rarity—an honest lawyer; but he had characteristics of a still more unusual kind. It was cruelly said of one of his profession who pretended to have them, that though a professing Christian, he was a practising attorney; but Mr. Allerton was really a religious man. How it came about was of course a subject of great speculation. His detractors said that since Lord Morella, his chief client, was one of the great leaders of the evangelical party, it was only natural—meaning that it was to his obvious interest—that Mr. Allerton should be evangelical too; but those who said so knew little about him, or were very shallow

critics. With this side of that gentleman's character, however, Mr. Tremenhere did not concern himself; he never meddled with matters he did not understand; but he knew that Mr. Allerton was an honest and trustworthy man, and for that reason, and that reason only, he was about to intrust him with the knowledge, and, he hoped, the management, of his private affairs.

On arriving at the lawyer's office he was shown into the waiting-room, which he was well pleased to see unoccupied, and sent in his card. The clerk who took it came back with promptitude, and the intimation that Mr. Allerton was very particularly engaged. If Mr. Tremenhere had any communication to make, he added, Mr. Allerton would be very happy to receive it—in writing.

Not the least disturbed by this rebuff, Mr. Tremenhere sat down and wrote, as requested, just a few words:

"My business is of the most pressing importance, and has nothing whatever to do with Lord C.'s affairs."

This he sealed with wax before confiding it to the messenger.

"Just give Mr. Allerton *that*," he said, with the air of a man who knows its contents will be attended to. Nor was his confidence misplaced. The clerk returned, though by no means immediately, with a civil request that Mr. Tremenhere would "walk this way."

He knew the way very well, for he had often trodden it on no very agreeable errands, and the last time had been the occasion on which that injurious remark had been applied to him which the exigencies of our story have compelled us (with much regret) to quote.

Mr. Allerton was a short, thin, wiry man, not much above middle-age, but with a gravity of countenance that made him appear older than he was. He looked even graver than usual as the money-lender was announced, rose from his chair without, however, moving foot or hand, and looking keenly at his visitor through his spectacles, inquired, in a tone that was far from conciliatory, "To what am I indebted, Mr. Tremenhere, for this entirely unexpected visit?"

"I want your professional assistance on a matter of great moment, but not a disputed one, and solely in connection with my own affairs."

"Then I think you had better go elsewhere, sir; to speak frankly, I have no desire to be connected with them, or with you, in any way. I have no interest in your affairs, Mr. Tremenhere."

"I venture to think that you will alter that opinion if you will have the patience to listen to me for five minutes," was the money-

lender's quiet rejoinder. "I am very unwell; will you permit me to take a chair?"

The lawyer frowned, but nodded; his face had not one touch of sympathy; he seemed to be saying to himself, like the diplomatist who heard that his astute rival was dying, "I wonder what he does that for?"

"I am quite aware, Mr. Allerton, of the opinion you entertain of me; and have neither the time, nor, to say truth, the desire to attempt to controvert it. I know that I have no claim upon your attention whatever, save one—our common humanity."

"Those are strange words to come from your lips, Mr. Tremenhere," said the lawyer, coldly, but looking at his visitor with some curiosity too. He was obliged to acknowledge to himself that the man looked ill, and the sense of having wronged him so far had its effect on him.

"I have just come from a doctor's consulting-room, who is not given to false predictions, and he has told me that my life hangs on a thread. Let the extreme urgency of my case excuse, at least, my intrusion."

"But why come to *me*, Mr. Tremenhere? You have friends of your own, as I have reason to know, learned in the law."

"Rogues all," interrupted the money-lender, curtly; "rogues all! I come to you because you are an honest man."

A dry smile parted the lawyer's lips.

"You think that a strange reason to actuate *me*, Mr. Allerton. You may think anything you like, if you will only act for me. I want you to make my will."

The lawyer shook his head. "I have no hesitation in saying that I positively decline that honor."

"Do you refuse to oblige a dying man by performing an ordinary duty of your profession? This is not what I expected of one whose name is synonymous with good-feeling as well as honesty. In any other case I should have appealed at first to an instinct which, in yours, as I am well convinced, has less influence—namely, self-interest. I propose to give you a thousand pounds for this great service."

"A thousand pounds!" Mr. Allerton was human, and in whose bosom beats the heart where the notion of earning a thousand pounds in an hour or two does not touch some sympathetic chord? He was moved for a moment; then, suddenly recovering himself, he exclaimed, with some heat, "You must be insulting me,

sir; your intention must be to bribe me to do something dishonorable!"

"A very natural supposition, I admit," said the money-lender, blandly. "But your suspicion is quite without foundation, as you will soon be convinced. I ought to have added that the sum in question is contingent upon your accepting the executorship."

"The executorship! Do you suppose I am going to draw up a will out of which I am myself to receive a thousand pounds?"

"Why not? It is no ordinary will, I promise you. If it were five thousand, there would be nothing strange or uncommon, if it were in due proportion to the bulk of the whole bequest, and in this case that is a million of money."

Even in the perilous state in which the money-lender stood, with the grave, as he felt, gaping for him, and all the things of this world, which had had so magnetic an attraction for him, slipping from his grasp, he uttered those last words with a certain proud complacency. Nor were they without their effect upon the lawyer himself. He was used to deal with large sums, but he knew how seldom a fortune of this size was placed at the sole disposal of a single individual. There was wonder, perhaps even a gleam of admiration, in his keen gray eyes; he was dazzled in spite of himself.

"Of course," continued the money-lender, "a man in your position, who is so good as to undertake this trust, will not be treated as a layman. There may be—there must be—many obligations connected with it, the discharge of each of which will, of course, receive its proper remuneration. If I were speaking to some lawyers whom you and I know, I should say, 'There will be pretty pickings;' but I am well aware that such considerations will have little weight with you. What I would rather dwell upon is the opportunities such a position will afford you of administering a vast estate to good advantage—the advantage, that is," he added, hastily, "of helpless and innocent young people—for I have three daughters, Mr. Allerton, who are not so well acquainted with finance as their father, and will doubtless stand in need of your advice and assistance."

The latter part of this statement would have been the reverse of attractive to most persons, but Mr. Tremenhere knew his man. Mr. Allerton was not averse to play the part of mentor to his clients; nor can we doubt that the knowledge that in this case he would be handsomely paid for it had its weight. Moreover, which was a great point with him, he would be robbing no one. If the money was the orphan's, it was not the sort of orphan that we are in the habit

of associating with the widow; his little charges would be mere fleabites to her. He felt much as the honest divine feels who is translated to another benefice—that it would be "a wider sphere of usefulness," and also involve an increase of stipend.

The lawyer looked at Mr. Tremenhere as certainly he had never thought to look—with something of personal interest as well as curiosity—as he replied:

"Well, well, we'll see about it. I'll think it over."

CHAPTER VII.

THE WILL.

When a man says, on any previously debated question (provided it is not an appeal to his purse-strings), that he will "think it over," his antagonist may generally congratulate himself on having gained his point; and under ordinary circumstances Mr. Tremenhere would have felt satisfied with the success he had so far achieved in a not very promising case. But there was that within him that "voted urgency" in this matter, and made procrastination almost one with failure.

"You are forgetting, Mr. Allerton, what I told you about the state of my health; whatever is to be done, it above all things behooves me to do it quickly."

There was that in the money-lender's words that reminded the lawyer of the unjust steward, and for a moment he hesitated as to whether he should comply with his request or not; that he was touching pitch there was no doubt whatever; but his hands were at least less likely to be defiled by it than those of any other man whom Mr. Tremenhere would be likely to employ; and then there was the thousand pounds down, and the pickings, and the opportunities for good.

"I suppose I must oblige you, Mr. Tremenhere," he said, with a sigh which blew away his last remnant of opposition, and the two men drew their chairs together. Like adversaries at whist, who cut and find themselves in partnership with one another, their old antagonism ceased at once, and they became lawyer and client.

Though Mr. Tremenhere's fortune was so immense, it was not one of those properties which, like port-wine, takes time to settle.

Almost the whole of it, save his Cumberland estate and his lease of Lebanon Lodge, was in what might be almost termed hard cash—securities, a list of which he had taken the precaution to bring with him. His knowledge of business matters was fully as great as that of his companion, and he knew exactly what he wanted—an attribute rare indeed, and which facilitates the operation of will-making above all others. Moreover, all that he desired at present was a synopsis of his intentions, duly witnessed, which, though valid in itself, might afterwards be expanded into a larger testament, should time and health be granted to him. This last circumstance, as it happened, was of great service to him in overcoming, here and there, certain objections on the lawyer's part, who would certainly have shown a more obstinate front but for the thought of the better opportunity that would presently be afforded him of arguing the matter.

"I set this down under protest, Mr. Tremenhere," he said more than once; "I hope you will remember this." And at the words, "To my faithful clerk and assistant, Edward Roscoe, I bequeath the sum of £5000," he could not restrain an ejaculation of astonishment. It was an unusual thing to do, of course; the will-maker should be a machine in such cases; but then he knew the gentleman—not personally, but in his relations with his client—so well.

"Quite so; I know what you are thinking, Mr. Allerton," said the money-lender, "as though you spoke it. He has feathered his nest pretty well for himself, no doubt, and out of my birds; but this is a promise. He saved my life last night, when he might have let me die, and greatly to his own advantage. It cannot happen now, as I shall frankly tell him, in case the temptation should occur again and be too strong for him. But one must keep one's word. You will do me the justice to say, I think, that I have always done that much."

Mr. Allerton inclined his head assentingly; he could do so without scruple; Josh's word had always been as good as his bond, which could only in a facetious sense have been said of most of those he dealt with. His will had been strong, but his promise had been irrefragable, however much to his disadvantage might have been its performance.

There were items in Mr. Tremenhere's testamentary instructions which went more against the grain with Mr. Allerton than that legacy to Mr. Roscoe; and though he looked upon the document as a temporary one, or rather as a bill in Parliament which the Opposition permits to pass upon the understanding that it shall be altered in committee, he did not hesitate to express his disapproval of it.

"I call this will of yours a cruel will, Mr. Tremenhere," he said, deliberately, when all was done.

"I am cruel only to be kind," answered the money-lender.

"That is, of course, your view. I do not accuse you of positive injustice, or I should not be acting for you; but in my opinion you are flying in the face of nature. Those who are dearest to you will think so, and not thank you for it."

"Then that will be because they don't know what is good for them," was the quiet rejoinder.

"They know better than you do," replied the lawyer, curtly; "what seems to you the highest good, at all events," he added, in a more conciliatory tone, "will not seem so to them. Money is not everything, Mr. Tremenhere, to everybody, even in this world."

"No doubt; but if they prefer something else, call it by what name you will, there is nothing here to prevent them indulging their inclinations. If they choose to be quixotic they can be so, and yet not starve."

"Yes, fortunately for your intentions, there are certain 'gifts over,' independent of the conditions; but even so, if this testament should be disputed, it is my duty to tell you that it is by no means unassailable."

"Do you mean to say that a man cannot leave his own money as he pleases?" inquired Mr. Tremenhere, scornfully.

"Certainly not, in all cases," returned the lawyer, dryly. "I do not say, however, that all I have set down here is not perfectly legal; but the Court is always prone, and rightly prone, to look with a jealous eye, unless there are the strongest reasons for it, on any restraint."

"And is religious scruple not a reason?" put in the money-lender, with virtuous indignation.

Mr. Allerton passed his hand over his lips to hide a smile.

"That also has been a point to be decided by the judge, ever since Lord Hardwicke's time. However, as I have told you, the conditions are perfectly legal. But I say again, Mr. Tremenhere, that it is a cruel will."

"I am sorry that you entertain that opinion, but I think a father should be the best judge of the interests of his own children. Outside that, if you have any objection to offer, I am ready to hear it."

"Then permit me to say that I think this conditional reversion of your property towards the discharge of the national debt is very little to your credit. It surprises me more than your other provi-

sions, though it shocks me less. I should have thought a man like you would be above such egotism."

"Very good," said the money-lender, indifferently, "let us strike that out."

This ready compliance with his suggestion amazed the lawyer and gave him hopes. It was plain that the expression of his views had no little influence with his strange client; and it surely behooved him to do his best to guide him aright.

"Mr. Tremenhere," he said, in a tone very different from that he had hitherto used, "you have just now asked me to bear witness to your fidelity to your word; may I ask you, in return, to believe that I am no hypocrite?"

"I am quite sure that you are not," answered the other, simply; "if I had thought so, I should not be here."

"Then let me adjure you to think again before you leave this legacy of wrong behind you. Do one good act, at all events, upon which, when you come to lie on your death-bed, you may look with satisfaction."

"I shall have no death-bed," was the dry rejoinder. "I shall die suddenly, Mr. Allerton; very likely in the street."

"Then between this and then, let there be something on which your mind can rest with comfort. I cannot see into your mind, but I am much mistaken if there is not something that troubles it. You are not so satisfied with what you have just done here"—he laid his finger on the will—"as you would have me believe."

"I am perfectly satisfied with it."

"I am sorry to hear it; it is not my business to speak of such things, but is there *nothing* you repent of, and for which even now some reparation can be made?"

The speaker was like one who shoots at a venture, but where he knows there is plenty of game.

"Yes!" interrupted the money-lender, sharply; "there is no need to go into the matter, but there *is*. I am obliged to you for reminding me of it. Instead of my property, in the contingencies referred to, reverting to the State, let it in the first instance revert to Robert Vernon—Heaven knows where he is now, but you may say sometime of Cockermouth."

"A relation?"

"Yes; the only one I have in the world—my cousin."

"There is some sense in *that*, at all events," observed the lawyer, as he made the alteration in favor of Robert Vernon or the heirs of

his body. He had seen too much of the "pious founder" to have any respect for *him*, and he had almost as much objection to the posthumous benefactors of the State.

Then he copied out the will with his own hand, and two of his clerks came in and witnessed it.

"You have laid me under a great obligation," said the money-lender, when all was done.

"You will best discharge it, Mr. Tremenhere," returned the other, gravely, "by taking a juster view of your responsibilities when we are treating this affair at large."

Mr. Tremenhere smiled and held out his hand, which, this time, was not refused.

As "a fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind," so a common interest unites those who would be otherwise as far asunder as the poles.

"If you would call in some day and make the acquaintance of my girls, Mr. Allerton, I should take it as a great kindness. It will make things easier for them afterwards. You know Lebanon Lodge?"

"Very well," replied the lawyer; but whether the answer referred to the invitation, or only to his knowledge of the locality, was doubtful.

Mr. Allerton knew Lebanon Lodge well enough, but hitherto it had certainly not been one of the places on his visiting list. What would Lord Morella say, he wondered, with his dry smile, if he came to know that Josh Tremenhere had become a client of his?

The money-lender left Mr. Allerton's office in a more tranquil frame of mind than that with which he had entered it. Even physically his visit to the lawyer had benefited him as much as that to the physician had depressed him. He felt that so far as the future was concerned—for Mr. Tremenhere's horizon was a very limited one—he could now snap his fingers at Fate. His reflections were no longer personal, as they had been a few hours ago; his mind was free to concern itself with others. He was just as likely to die as before, of course, but the matter was not so pressing or important, and he could speculate upon it apart from himself. What would become, he wondered, with a grim smile, of that wild team of thorough-breds he had so well in hand, but of the management of which none but he possessed the secret? How they would rear and bolt, and kick over the traces, and upset the coach, when he should be no longer on the box-seat! Roscoe thought a good deal of himself as a whip, no doubt, but he would probably make a

precious mess of it. Mr. Tremenhere felt the same satisfaction in contemplating the overturn as did the diplomatist who observed "After me the Deluge." Roscoe would step into his shoes, no doubt, and try to wear them, unless indeed he contemplated that shorter way to wealth of which he had so lately accused him. Whether he did so or not was not of much consequence now; but either way there would be disappointments for Roscoe. Five thousand pounds is a large bequest to one who is no relation to the testator, but he was well aware that it would not satisfy the legatee in this case. He would look for more than half per cent. of what his employer left behind him: for he had good reason to expect to be left executor. It is not always a judicious act, however, to make a poacher one's game-keeper. How he would stare to find Allerton's name, of all names, in that little document that had just been executed, instead of his own! And, above all, how the document itself would make him stare!

"You are not so satisfied with it as you would have me believe," the lawyer had said; but he was perfectly satisfied with it. "A juster view of your responsibilities," forsooth; that was the only bit of cant which the other had indulged in—that and his absurd remark that the girls knew what was good for them better than he did. Why, Allerton didn't even know the girls. Would he call, he wondered, and see Grace? She would be certain to interest him, and it would be well indeed for his little Fairy to do so—to have some one outside, Lebanon Lodge and all belonging to it, to whom to apply for counsel.

He was walking through the Park beside the Row, but at the upper end of it, where there were few people, and sat down on an empty bench to rest a little.

His little Fairy! She was the only being, as he believed, in all the world that would regret him; and even so would be regretting some one else that was not himself at all. It would be better for her that he should go before her eyes were opened. If his chances of life had been good, things might have been very different. As he thoughtfully puffed at his cigar and watched the smoke, a picture rose before him of what might have been. He saw himself "retired from business"; greatly looked up to by the world at large on account of the money he had made, but with no desire—and this was the strangest part of his dream—to increase his store. He had no friends, for he had never made any, nor sought to make them; but there was one house which was always open to him, and where

he was welcomed by its mistress with open arms. It was one of those "stately homes of England" at whose size and splendor foreigners stand amazed; a place he had seen pictured many times. Its master was a young fellow he had always liked, but there had been faults and flaws in him of old which no longer existed. He was a peer of the realm, but also a good husband. There were little children in the house, one of them the image of his little Fairy, as she had looked some twelve years ago or so, and they called him "Grandpapa."

It was rather a snobbish and pinchbeck dream, perhaps, but such as it was it soothed and pleased him wonderfully. He felt quite annoyed when a couple of riders passing at full speed aroused him from it.

"How are you, Josh?" one called out as they swept by, and afterwards the breeze brought to his ear from both of them—or so it seemed to him—a sound of mocking laughter.

The horsemen were Lord Cheribert and General Saint-Gatien.

There was nothing of novelty in the incident; certainly nothing that under ordinary circumstances would have ruffled the moneylender; but, just now, it did ruffle him.

"I have been an old fool," he murmured; "but only for five minutes. It shall never happen again. Saint-Gatien yonder was once good enough to tell me that he had heard Josh Tremenhere called all sorts of names, but that he had never heard anybody call him a fool. And I'll take good care that it never shall be so."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FIRE.

The niceties of religious scruple are among the most curious things in human nature, and not the less so to those who entertain them—though in a different form from those which excite their wonder—themselves. I have seen an excellent young woman, devoted to suet-pudding and treacle, take the pudding without the treacle because the day was a Friday. I have known a man who wouldn't touch a card on Sunday for the wealth of the Indies play at bagatelle without a prick of conscience. It is in the matter of amusement, indeed, that these refinements of propriety are most ob-

servable. In what is called "the religious world," for example, to take a walk upon a Sunday (except in some parts of Scotland) is permissible, but to mount a tricycle is sacrilegious; to attend dramatic representations is held to be impious, but to listen to Shakespeare readings is an innocent recreation. The opera is a synonym for the infernal regions, but the concert-room is a place which the best of men can patronize without risk of their eternal welfare.

That a person of good-sense and intelligence like Mr. Allerton should strain at these gnats, and yet be a solicitor in large practice, may seem strange; but he did other things quite as unwarrantable in the eyes of reason, which the world at large was not at all surprised at. He was a bachelor, and had no one to work for but himself; he was not greedy for gain, and yet he passed eight hours a day in a dingy office, adding to a fortune that was already far too large for his simple needs. For my part, such conduct seems the act of an idiot; but other people may think *me* an idiot for indulging in *my* little eccentricities, which travel in another direction. We all possess glass houses of some kind or another—though yours and mine, reader, are mere cucumber frames—and should not throw stones.

Mr. Allerton was very fond of music, though he would not have listened to an orchestra in a theatre to oblige Lord Morella himself (and, indeed, it was very unlikely that his lordship would have asked that favor of him); and he thought it no harm, a few nights after his interview with Mr. Tremenhere, to find himself sitting in a stall at the new Harmony Hall in South Kensington.

It was an edifice the old lawyer knew something about, for he had been the solicitor to the company who built it, but it was not on that account that it now enjoyed his patronage; he would have gone anywhere else, and at no small inconvenience to himself, to hear such singing as its programme promised him to-night. He had come early, though not so much from fearing to miss any of it as from habit—you could be five minutes too late for everything in the world worth having, he used to say, but you could not be five minutes too soon—and he amused himself by watching the house fill. He was a little deaf, and had consequently taken a stall close to the stage, and he stood up with his back to it, opera-glass in hand, and looked about him. There were a good many people he knew, and they him: for the most part, quiet unfashionable folks, very different from the sparkling throng that chat and smile with one another at the playhouse; he thought little of them at the

time, but circumstances afterwards arose which caused him to remember them all very particularly. In his vicinity, however, there were only strangers. Presently a party of three entered the house, one of whom at once arrested his attention. She was a young girl of great beauty, but what attracted him in her was the animation and pleasure that lit up her face. Scenes of public amusement, it was plain, were unfamiliar to her; and she was looking forward to her coming treat with childish expectation. Innocence has an attraction, it is said, for lawyers, but for this one it had a peculiar and quite unprofessional charm; like the spectacle of a fair landscape at early dawn, it seemed to do Mr. Allerton good. He was so rapt in contemplation of the girl that only the sense that she was growing much too large reminded him that he might be bestowing an unacceptable attention on her. She was coming very near him, and he shut up his glasses rather hastily and took his seat, and consulted his programme. When he looked up from it he perceived, not without satisfaction, that she was sitting next to him.

"What a wicked old man!" some people would have said, had he confessed as much; but "some people" are unable to appreciate the finer pleasures; what he looked forward to was a reflected happiness, the delight he knew would be aroused in that charming and innocent face at what she had come to hear. Beside her, of course, were sitting her two companions, one of them a tall, well-built man, of powerful frame, and with a face that most persons would have pronounced handsome; when he smiled, it was certainly so, but when he was not smiling, it struck the lawyer that it had a sinister expression. He was dark, like the young lady, but had no other resemblance to her; he could hardly be her father, yet his manner to her seemed parental, affectionate, and almost playful in its protective kindness; with the other, a commonplace young woman, tolerably good-looking, and with very bright eyes, he was familiar, but less demonstratively so. Mr. Allerton concluded, though there was a considerable difference in their ages, that the party were brother and sisters.

The performance was musical as well as vocal, and when the notes of the organ, "like a god in pain," began to fill the hushed air, "it was pretty" (as Mr. Pepys with much inappropriateness would have said) to watch the changes that swept over the girl's speaking face. At times, even, thought Mr. Allerton, in his "serious," commonplace way, she seemed to be communing with the blessed angels themselves; at others, the dew stood in her eyes and

an intense melancholy seemed to hold possession of her, caused, perhaps, by some exaggerated sense of her own unworthiness.

When the first singer came to the front she was less moved, but not less pleasant to look upon, for she was more herself. The song was a very difficult one, and tried the vocal powers to the utmost; she seemed to follow every note and sympathize with every obstacle surmounted, and her small hands met together at the close with eager appreciation. But with the enthusiasm it evoked in some quarters it was plain she had no sympathy; it touched the sense for her, but not the soul. Then came a simple ballad, such as when trilled by a cracked voice in the streets will reach the heart, but when sung as now by one formed by art and nature to do justice to it, makes the whole world of listeners kin. In the midst of it, while the girl was weeping with bowed-down head, Mr. Allerton and her companion shot a glance at one another over it, full of dread significance. There was smoke proceeding from one side of the stage, followed by a solitary tongue of flame.

"Fire! Fire!" screamed some one from the gallery, and the whole house rose at once as at the national anthem, only a great deal quicker.

"Fire! Fire!" was echoed in a dozen places, and all that decorous, respectable assemblage was transformed in another instant to a pandemonium.

It is easy to say "What cowards!" as we read of such things in our own chairs at home, with the serene conviction that if such an event had happened to ourselves we should have been as cool as cucumbers; but the fact is there is a thing called "panic" against which ordinary courage—the courage of the soldier—struggles in vain; even the Die Hards, we read, were once victims to it. Nevertheless, there were a few exceptions to the general stampede that at once took place from every part of the concert-room. Mr. Allerton's first thought was for the girl beside him. He heard her companion exclaim, "Keep your seats, both of you!" by which he knew that he was well fitted to be a protector to one of them; but it was also plain that in that raging rout no one man, however strong and resolute, could save two helpless women. The same thought, he saw, was passing through the other's mind. Even in that awful moment the passions depicted on that swarthy face did not escape his observation; its vehement resentment of the fate that seemed about to overtake them, and then the terrible struggle as to which of his two charges should be his care, could be read distinctly in it; and finally,

though the whole thing did not take a moment, the man's eyes fixed themselves on the elder woman.

"I will take care of the young lady," said the lawyer, in quiet but unhesitating tones.

"Thank you, Mr. Allerton," returned the other, a flush of gratitude lighting up his dark features; "there is not a moment to lose."

If there had been, the fact of being addressed by his own name would certainly have struck the lawyer; but at the time he was unconscious of aught but the peril to which the other referred. The flame was already licking the side scenes, and the heat was becoming unbearable; the advice of "Keep your seats" to those who, like themselves, were near the stage could no longer be followed. The two men helped the women over the backs of the emptied stalls to the last row, and waited for the door-way to be cleared. The spectacle was frightful. The room itself, in spite of the myriad lights that hung about it, was getting dim with smoke, but they could see the remnant of the frantic crowd fighting and tearing at one another at the narrow exit like fiends incarnate. The girl released her arm from Mr. Allerton's hold, and covered her face with her hands, as if to shut out the shocking scene. She had not spoken a word from first to last, but had done exactly as he had instructed her to do; whereas her sister had uttered shriek on shriek, and had been so possessed with terror that her companion had had to carry her in his arms over the last three rows of stalls. In spite of their terrible situation this had aroused his anger.

"If you mean to perish miserably, you are going the way to do it, Philippa," he exclaimed, in passionate tones; "whereas if you will but keep your feet and stick to me, I will cut my way through these cowardly fools;" and he had looked at them as he spoke so savagely that it was easy to imagine him, hatchet in hand, putting his threat into execution. His words, however inappropriate from a moral point of view, were not without their good effect upon the person he addressed, and revived her not a little, as harshness is said to bring to themselves persons in hysterics. She murmured something in his ear, to which he nodded a grim assent.

Mr. Allerton would have been incapable of applying such strong remedies, even if the case of his companion had called for them, but he, too, addressed to her a few words of quiet assurance.

"The door-way will soon be clear, my dear," he said, "and you may be sure, whatever happens, that I will not desert you."

She looked up in his pitiful eyes with an expression of ineffable gratitude, reading the generous and earnest purpose in them, and murmured her simple trust in him. It seemed to both these strangers of five minutes ago that they had known one another for years. By this time the fire had wrapped the whole of the stage, and sparks from they knew not whence were flying in all directions. They all moved hastily towards the door, now blocked by only a few stragglers, and presently emerged with them into a low and narrow passage. Except that the fire was for the moment hidden from view, their position seemed now even more hopeless and inextricable. A compact mass of human beings, their features distorted with rage and fear, their garments torn and dishevelled, and trampling one another underfoot with the most shocking indifference, filled the entire space between them and the entrance-hall.

"There are no stairs," Mr. Allerton heard his male companion mutter, as if to himself; then, aloud, "Philippa, put your arms round my waist, and if you loose your hold, remember, you lose your life."

As he spoke the words he threw himself on the struggling throng, and by sheer strength, like a wedge beaten by the hammer, forced his way slowly through it, dragging his companion after him.

"I have not the strength for that," murmured Mr. Allerton, "even if I had the will."

The girl at his side heard him; the look of fear in her pale face had changed to one of horror.

"I would rather die," she said, "than do it."

To die to some persons is easy, but to perish by devouring flame is appalling to the best and bravest of us. The air in the unventilated passage was by this time almost suffocating, and above the crackle and the roar of the fire rose the eddying smoke and found its way to them. The mass of people in front was moving onward, but almost as imperceptibly as the march of a glacier; it seemed impossible that the last of them—and they two were the very last—could reach the outer air alive.

Suddenly a thought struck Mr. Allerton; there rose up before his inward eye a plan of the hall as he had seen it before it was built. From one of the two passages opening from the stalls there was a stone staircase, he remembered, leading under the stage, and at the side of it a door opening into an unfrequented court. His impression was that it was the passage in which they were, but he was not sure. We cry for faith in the fathomless future, but what would

he not have given—about this matter of the present seemingly so small—for certainty! Should he try that way and be mistaken, they would both without doubt be lost; yet that other way seemed almost devoid of hope. For once the lawyer felt a responsibility that was too great for his own shoulders. Like a rider who has lost his way, and in despair throws his reins upon his horse's neck, he decided to leave the matter to his companion's choice. There was no instinct, indeed, in her case to guide her, but perhaps He who gives instinct and all other good things to his creatures might in his mercy give this innocent girl a right judgment. In a few hasty words he therefore put the matter before her.

"If I am wrong, my child," he added—but the thought that in that case she would perish, and by his own act, was too much for him, and he could not finish the sentence.

"If you are wrong," she put in, "you will have done your best for me"—it was not selfishness, but her appreciation of the nobility of the other's conduct, that forbade her to say "for us"—"and more than could have been looked for in any stranger. As to my choice in the matter, I say any way but that way," and she pointed with a shudder to the surging crowd, above which her late companion's form could be discovered at some distance battling without scruple, but not without success, for the dear life.

"So be it, then," said Mr. Allerton, solemnly; "this way, my child." And he took her hand as though she were a child indeed. In turning their backs on their fellow-creatures, they did not feel as if they were deserting them, but rather as if they themselves were bidding good-bye to life. If the crowd, in fact, had turned to the right instead of the left, not one in ten would probably have been then alive, for after about ten feet it terminated in a steep stone staircase, down which even those two in the gathering smoke had to feel rather than see their way. They were much nearer to the seat of the fire than they had been before, and the roaring of the flames on the other side of the brick wall that alone intervened between it and them was terrific. The heat, too, was growing almost insupportable. Had the gaslights then gone out, which happened a few minutes afterwards, no human power could have saved them. At the end of the staircase, however, they could see the closed door of which they were in search; their clasped hands clutched one another as they caught sight of it, but neither spoke. The thought which was in the mind of each was, "Is it locked or unlocked?" There were some tools lying on the floor—a chisel and

hammer among them—which, however, there would have been no time to use; perhaps some one had already used them to force the door—or, rather, it was more likely they had been flung down by the stage workmen, who knew this way of egress and had escaped by it. Mr. Allerton turned the handle and the door yielded to his touch. They were saved!

CHAPTER IX.

REUNITED.

THERE was a wind that night which carried the smoke and flame from the burning hall to the opposite side of it, and left the court in which Mr. Allerton and his young companion now found themselves canopied by the flying clouds and the quiet stars. As they looked up to them, both the old man and the girl said something, though not to each other, and then the girl poured out a few broken words of passionate thanks to her human preserver.

"Tut, tut, my dear," he answered, gently; "if it had not been for your wise choice, and your most admirable behavior, we should not—"

"Philippa! let us find dear Philippa and Mr. Roscoe," she interrupted, excitedly.

"To be sure," he said, putting her arm in his, and hurrying on. He was not very much alarmed on their account as he remembered his last glimpse of them. If any man could make his way to the front, it was, he felt from what he had heard as well as seen of him—it was that man, but the name, of course, was a revelation to him.

"Mr. Roscoe is your brother, I suppose," he said, conscious of a certain involuntary lessening of interest in his young charge, of which he was nevertheless ashamed.

"No, no; he is no relation; but he lives at home with us. He is papa's secretary."

"What! is your father Mr. Tremenhere?"

"Yes, I am his daughter Grace. Is it possible that you know him? How grateful he will be to you. Oh, if Philippa should only be safe! What a dreadful crowd! What a frightful scene!"

As they turned the corner of the court, the spectacle that presented itself was striking indeed. A mass of people, all in black, as it seemed, filled every inch of standing-ground, and were only

kept back from the approaches to the hall by mounted police. Everything above and about them was wet, and shone in the lurid flame that was now leaping up to the skies. The roar of the fire mixed with the mechanical beat of the engines, which were playing on it torrents of water in all directions. The conflagration was not kept under, but it was delayed.

"I feel quite assured, Grace, that your sister and her companion are by this time in safety; but it is impossible that you can either get to them or they to you. I will take you home, where doubtless they will have arrived before us."

"But, dear Mr. Allerton, it feels as though we were deserting them."

It was on the lawyer's lips to reply that they had not shown much scruple about deserting *her*, but the thought of the perilous state of the money-lender's health suddenly occurred to him.

"If only for your father's sake, my dear," he said, "we ought to go home at once, and break what has happened to him. If the news of the hall being on fire should reach him by other means, it might have serious consequences."

"To be sure, it would frighten dear papa very much, would it not?" she assented.

It was clear to her companion that she was unaware of her father's state of health; that it did not enter her mind that it might even frighten him to death.

"Even if Philippa, as you say, has got home," she continued, thoughtfully, "he will still be in great anxiety upon my account."

"Indeed I should think he would," returned the lawyer, "for he ought to be very fond of you."

"Oh, but he *is*," she answered, eagerly, "much fonder of me than I deserve. He calls me his little Fairy."

"Really?"

The fact itself astonished the lawyer. He could not fancy Josh Tremenhere using a pet name even to his own daughter; but when he coupled it with those remarkable provisions in his will, it seemed amazing in its inconsistency.

"Well, I am sure you are a good fairy," he answered, as lightly as he could. In spite of the presence of mind his companion had shown, far beyond her years, he perceived from her distracted air, and the broken tones of her voice, that she was deeply agitated, and that but for her sense of obligation she would probably not have replied to him at all.

As they walked on together homeward she kept glancing back at the fire, and shook and shuddered at the appalling noise it made. It was with difficulty that they made their way through the crowds that were hurrying to the spectacle. A commissioner of police came galloping down the road, and stopped a mounted patrol coming at full speed from the other direction.

"The people are all out, sir," they heard the latter say, in reply to some hurried question. "There have been no lives lost."

"You hear *that*, my dear," said the lawyer, comfortingly; and the answering pressure of her hand upon his arm was very welcome to him. The idea, he was glad to think, had not occurred to her which had occurred to him, that since there were at least two persons not accounted for whom the patrol knew nothing about, his statement could not be very trustworthy.

They walked on in silence—the girl, though somewhat consoled, still full of fears for her sister, the lawyer reflecting on the strange chance which, despite his resolution to the contrary, was taking him to Lebanon Lodge. If the money-lender could have looked into his mind, he would have been well assured that the man he had made his executor and trustee would take an interest in one at least of his three charges, and would have been duly grateful for it. Strange to say, however, this good-will was not reciprocated; for just in proportion to the admiration Mr. Allerton felt for the brave girl beside him, Mr. Allerton despised his client. How a man could possess such a daughter, and even as it would seem to some extent appreciate her, and yet set such a fancy value upon his money, was amazing to him. He had many clients who thought a great deal of their wealth, yet always in connection with its advantage to them or theirs; but Joseph Tremenhere worshipped his wealth itself as though it were the final good.

There were lights in the drawing-room at Lebanon Lodge, but nowhere else; nor was there any stir about the house, such as there doubtless would have been had their absence excited alarm. It was plain to them that Philippa and her companion had not arrived, and at Mr. Allerton's request Grace said nothing to the servant as to the reason of their delay. Mr. Tremenhere, he informed them, to the lawyer's great relief, had already retired to rest, but Miss Agnes was in the drawing-room. She was, of course, surprised to see her sister in company with a stranger; but when she heard the cause of it her agitation and alarm seemed almost to deprive her of her senses.

"The hall on fire; with Philippa and Edward there! and you

left them!" and she threw a look at her sister full of such anger and contempt that poor Grace quailed beneath it.

"On the contrary, madam," said Mr. Allerton, fired at an accusation so unjust hurled at so innocent an object, "Mr. Roscoe left *us*. I feel very certain that he has taken good care of himself, and of Miss Philippa likewise."

"You deserted them. He is lost!" cried Agnes, turning upon the lawyer with angry vehemence; then bursting into tears, she threw herself into a chair and gave vent to a passionate spell of weeping.

"At all events, he has not been lost for very long," observed Mr. Allerton, dryly; he pointed to the window, which looked into the little court-yard, where the missing couple could be seen emerging from a hansom.

Agnes leaped to her feet with a little cry of joy; then at once recovered her self-control.

"I am sorry to have spoken as I did, Mr. Allerton," she exclaimed, "but I was almost out of mind upon my sister's account."

"Your apology is due, madam," he replied, coldly, "less to me than to your other sister."

She ran up to Grace and embraced her at once; the best thing she could have done to show her penitence, and one which considerably mollified the lawyer.

"Let them make less noise below, if you please," he said; "I happen to know that your father is far from well, and that all excitement has been forbidden to him."

He spoke with earnestness, and with a certain air of command, which in a stranger must have seemed to require explanation; but Agnes did not question his authority; she was very willing to conciliate this man, whoever he was, before whom she was conscious she had committed a great imprudence; she thought he was some doctor whom her father had consulted. Even if what he said was true, however, it was just then comparatively of small matter to her; her mind was full of more pressing things. Grace, on the other hand, had run down-stairs at once, as much to hush the noise in the hall as to welcome the new-comers.

Philippa embraced her with passionate fervor.

"Thank Heaven! thank Heaven!" she sobbed, as she pressed her to her bosom. An unmistakable touch of remorse mingled with her joyful accents.

"Imagine," she murmured, "our horror, when we strained our eyes in vain to see you come out of that horrible place."

"I told her, however, my dear Grace, that you were in safe guidance," put in Mr. Roscoe, smiling. "If I had not been sure of that, we would never have left you."

"It was all for the best," said Grace, as he wrung her hand. She knew that her tone was colder than she wished it to be. She was not displeased with him for leaving her, but for the manner of it as regarded others. She still seemed to see him shouldering those poor frightened creatures to left and right; it had been to some degree a revelation to her of his true character. She could never think of him as being "nice," in any sense, again.

His quick intelligence perceived the ground he had lost with her, but not the cause.

"I am afraid, Grace, you feel a grudge against me," he said, plaintively. "Philippa will tell you that directly I had saved her I tried to go back again for you."

"He did indeed, Grace," put in Philippa, earnestly, "only the police would not permit it. How dreadful it was pushing through that shrieking crowd. When they came out it was in great knots and bundles, not like human beings at all; that was why we were unable to recognize you. My dress is torn to pieces, but yours—why, you look as if nothing had happened to you!" she added, with amazement.

"Mr. Allerton and I escaped by another way, quite alone."

"There! I told you how good a guide she had got, Miss Philippa," exclaimed Mr. Roscoe, triumphantly.

"You might have also said how kind a one," said Grace, with tender enthusiasm. "I owe him more than words can say."

"I shall certainly write to-morrow to express my deep sense of obligation to him," observed Mr. Roscoe.

"Mr. Allerton is at this moment in the house," she answered; "he saw me home, and naturally waited here for your arrival. Poor Agnes has been in a dreadful state about you both."

"No doubt," said Mr. Roscoe, "but more particularly, of course, upon your sister's account. I think, Miss Philippa, it would be very kind of you to go up to Miss Agnes; she can hardly leave her guest alone."

Philippa left the room at once—they had been talking in one that led out of the hall—and Grace was about to follow her, when Mr. Roscoe stopped her.

"One moment, dear Miss Grace. Mr. Allerton, I suppose, knows who you all are?"

"Oh yes; I told him, and, as you are aware, he is an intimate friend of dear papa."

"I think you are mistaken there. They have had business relations with one another, but that is all."

"But it is not so; he must be very intimate with him; he told me what alarms and pains me very much—that there is something seriously amiss with papa's health, of which he has never spoken to us."

"How strange!" Mr. Roscoe's astonishment was perfectly genuine. He knew, of course, of his employer's ailment, but that he should have confided it to Mr. Allerton, of all men in the world, was news indeed—and bad news. His mind leaped at once, if not to the right explanation of the matter, to a suspicion of it. He remembered that on the day after his seizure Mr. Tremenhere had passed the whole morning away from home, on some business of which he had never spoken. Was it possible that he had made his will, with the apprehension of what might happen to him any day strong upon him, and had gone to Mr. Allerton for that purpose? The chagrin that Mr. Roscoe's face exhibited as the thought crossed him was beyond even his powers to conceal. Grace naturally took it for sympathetic sorrow.

"Then you, too, were unaware," she said, "of anything very wrong with dear papa? A sudden shock, Mr. Allerton said, might be serious to him. Good heavens! can it be possible that he has heart disease?"

"I have never heard a whisper of such a thing, Miss Grace; but a person has only to be eminent in any walk of life to have all sorts of stories told about him, and Mr. Allerton is in the way of hearing such matters. Did he happen, by-the-way, when you were alone together, to speak of *me?*"

"Not a word. We were too much engaged, I fear, with selfish thoughts to talk of anybody."

She said this with some embarrassment, arising from an unaccustomed sense of duplicity, for she well remembered what they had thought of Mr. Roscoe, though they had not spoken of him.

"I am glad of that," he answered, smiling. "Mr. Allerton and I have been antagonists—not personally, of course, but in business matters—and that might have prejudiced him against me. Henceforward, I need hardly say, I can never regard him save with the most heart-felt gratitude. Oh, Grace—for I must call you Grace, if it be but for this once only—never shall I forget the horror of that

moment when I was compelled to intrust your precious life to another. It was no question of choice, believe me."

"How could it have been?" she put in, simply. It was evident she had missed his meaning, which had referred to his taking Philippa instead of herself. The innocence of her tone convinced him of the stupendous error that he had been on the point of committing.

"Your generous nature prompts you to say to yourself, 'Necessity has no law,'" he continued, "but I can never forget that in that moment of danger and despair I turned my back upon you."

"I don't see how you could have done otherwise, Mr. Roscoe," she replied, calmly. She had almost said, "I don't see, *so far*, how you could have done otherwise." It was again not the remembrance of his desertion of her at all (which had seemed really a necessity), but that of his behavior to others, which made her tone so cold. But he had not the key of this, and he felt that his protestations had missed fire.

"I think you should be wishing Mr. Allerton good-bye," he observed, deferentially, with a little sigh.

"True, it is getting late. Let us go very quietly up-stairs, so as not to risk waking dear papa."

But when she reached the drawing-room she found, to her surprise, that Mr. Roscoe was not following her. She thought it strange, considering what had happened, that he should omit to make his personal acknowledgments to Mr. Allerton; but perhaps his modesty suggested that they should more fitly come from her father.

CHAPTER X.

SPECULATIONS.

Mr. Allerton, when Grace left him, as he thought, a little ungratefully, alone with her sister, was by no means pleased with his position. He was not favorably impressed with Miss Agnes and her late outbreak of temper, and if he had followed his own inclination, would have then and there bade her adieu. To depart, however, in peace and solitude was impossible, since he would have had to run the gantlet of the little party in the hall; and, moreover, as he reflected—since he had accepted the trust Mr. Tremenhere had pressed upon him—here was an opportunity of learning something

of the character of one, at least, of the three ladies who would probably at no distant date become his charge. He already knew that she had not a very good temper; but, on the other hand, he did not do her the injustice of supposing that it was a small thing that had put her out. The apprehension that her sister stood in danger of death by fire was enough to upset the equanimity of any woman, and to kindle her indignation against those whom she suspected of having failed in providing for her safety. But, had she been actuated by this emotion, she would have shown a corresponding joy in welcoming Grace on her escape from her severe peril; and this he had noticed she had not done. She had been glad to see her safe and sound, of course; but there had been no ecstasy of congratulation, such as he had looked for. She might, indeed, have cared more for the elder sister than her younger, but this idea the lawyer dismissed as impossible. In his view there could be no comparison between those two young women. The conclusion he came to was that, since Miss Agnes had shown such an unmistakable agitation at the thought of the peril in which the missing couple stood, it must have been on account of Mr. Edward Roscoe.

As a rule, he was not much given to the study of the human heart. It does not, as in the case of the physician, affect the lawyer in his professional practice, and Mr. Allerton was a lawyer to his fingertips. But to-night he was not himself. He had just passed through an experience which had moved his very soul; he had been brought into intimate relations with a person quite out of his usual experience, but in whom he felt an interest, for the moment, absorbing, and all connected with her seemed to have a claim upon it. To be on good terms with her eldest sister would obviously be of advantage to him in his future role (as he pictured it) of Grace's friend and protector; and though he did not like Miss Agnes, he resolved to make an effort to produce a contrary impression on her as regarded himself. From what he knew of her father, and guessed of her bringing up, as well as from the glimpse he had caught of her masterful and passionate spirit, he concluded that compliments would be wasted upon her—or, at all events, compliments paid by *him*. He was naturally inclined to say something of the courage and good sense that had been exhibited by her sister in the late trying circumstances; but he rightly judged that a reference to some one else, who was of greater consequence to her materially, if not more loved, would be more likely to prove attractive.

"As we have these few moments together, Miss Tremenhere," he said, "I must excuse myself for having unwittingly betrayed a professional secret. You have been all hitherto, he tells me, unaware of the state of your father's health."

The abstracted look—for she had been listening to the voices in the hall—vanished from her face at once, and was succeeded by one of eager interest.

"You are his medical man, I presume?"

"No, madam, his confidential lawyer."

It was a bold stroke, and a doubtful one; but there was no time to consider matters in all their bearings; directly he had spoken, however, he felt that he had done well. He had certainly lost no ground with her by telling her the truth so far; she was all attention.

"The imminence of the danger to which I knew your father would be exposed by any sudden shock," he continued, "compelled me to speak out on a matter on which I should have been otherwise bound to silence. I trust that you will not take advantage of my confidence to reveal the fact to others."

"Grace heard it," observed Miss Agnes, sententiously.

"Yes; but I think I have sufficient influence with her to induce her to keep silence about it."

(She was discussing the matter at that very moment with Mr. Roscoe down-stairs—the man of all others from whom the lawyer would have kept it.)

Miss Agnes nodded, and looked unmistakably for more.

"I have told her no details; she is impulsive and impressionable, and such things would only alarm her; but I believe I am now speaking to a young lady of practical good sense. I may say at once that your father has heart disease."

"Poor papa," she said.

If the invalid had been a lapdog, most women would have said "Poor Fido" with more feeling. It was a revelation, though not altogether an unexpected one, to the hearer.

"Yes; I had it from his own lips, and under circumstances that leave no doubt of its correctness. I would urge upon you, therefore, to remove from him as much as possible all exciting causes, without, of course, letting him know that you are taking such precautions."

"What circumstance?" she inquired, gravely.

For a moment the lawyer knew not what she meant. It seemed

incredible that she could have thus ignored the important advice he had been giving her; nor, indeed, had she done so; the simple fact was that, lost in the thoughts his communication had awakened, she had not heard him.

"That is a matter concerning your father's private affairs," he answered, coldly.

She nodded significantly and unabashed. If she had said, "I understand, he was making his will," she could not have expressed herself more distinctly.

"I have often heard of 'a woman of business,'" thought the lawyer—and indeed he had often heard *from* them (or rather from ladies who called themselves such), and at considerable length—"but here for the first time do I see one in the flesh. What a partner she'd make for *some* gentleman in my profession!"

Here Philippa entered the room, and the two sisters flew into one another's arms, but not, he noticed, as birds fly, or at least lovebirds. If Mr. Allerton had been a play-goer it would have struck him that there was a good deal of "stage direction" about it. What seemed contrary to expectation, the younger sister was far the most effusive.

"Oh, Agnes, what have I suffered since I saw you last! Never, never did I expect to see you again. But Mr. Allerton—oh, sir, how can we ever thank you for preserving our dear Grace!—has doubtless told you all."

"He has told me about Grace and himself," she answered, coldly; "but it appears you got separated from her."

"Yes, in that dreadful turmoil. Mr. Allerton will bear witness that it could not be helped. What a scene it was; would that I could forget it!"

"Still, while it is fresh in your memory, tell me how you escaped."

If Miss Philippa had been alone with her sister she would doubtless have told her whatever she thought proper to tell; but in Mr. Allerton's presence, who had witnessed the whole transaction, it was not such an easy task. She was far from being ashamed of having taken the only means that had been offered her of getting out of the burning hall, but the details she had her reasons for being unwilling to communicate. She was really unable to recall what words her companion had said to her in that moment of horror, when she had almost lost her wits, but she had an uneasy sense that it was unfortunate they had been overheard; she did remember how she had clung to him in that crowded passage. She could hardly say

"Mr. Roscoe gave me his arm and helped me out," in the presence of a person who had seen how the thing was done, and might even have already described it.

"The whole affair, my dear Agnes," she said, desperately, "is so painful and shocking to me that I must be excused from dwelling upon it just at present."

The cold blue eyes of Miss Agnes flashed incredulously; her thin lips curled with the promise of something extremely unpleasant to come, when fortunately at that very moment Grace entered. The look of both the sisters was at once concentrated on the door; they had expected some one else, or some one besides; and it was obviously a relief to both of them that he had not come. It was also a relief to Mr. Allerton, who had seen quite enough of Mr. Edward Roscoe, and had heard too much.

"Now I see you all three united," said the lawyer, rising from his chair, "I will take my leave. You must have a great deal to talk about, and it is getting late."

Agnes offered him some refreshment, but he declined it.

"I will not forget," she whispered, with a grateful smile, as she took his hand.

Philippa pressed his fingers, as much perhaps to bespeak his goodwill as to acknowledge his services, but said nothing.

"If I should once begin to say what I owe you, Mr. Allerton, I should never have done," said Grace, softly. "Dear papa will see you, of course, to-morrow?"

"I hope so; not that I want his thanks; but tell him I shall hope to see him," said the lawyer, earnestly. "Good-bye, my dear."

Mr. Allerton walked home that night, instead, as was his usual custom, of taking a cab. He was full of reflections evoked by the events of the last few hours, and he gave them rein. The three sisters, and the very different behavior they had exhibited, interested him extremely. It was clear to him that their executor and trustee would have his work cut out for him. About Grace he had no apprehensions; it would be his pleasure and privilege to do his best for her, and she would give him credit for good intentions; but with Miss Agnes and Miss Philippa he foresaw there would be trouble. What was very curious, considering the position Mr. Roscoe evidently occupied in the house, his name had been never mentioned by either of them; nor could this arise from want of regard for him, since in the case of Miss Agnes, at all events, a very particular interest had been shown in his welfare. It was intelligible enough that Miss

Philippa should have been disinclined to describe to her sister the manner of her escape, which, however necessitated by circumstances and satisfactory in its result, could scarcely be a subject for pleasurable reminiscence; but her avoidance of Mr. Roscoe's name was remarkable. Since there could have been no secret as to his having been her companion on the occasion in question, why should she have been so reticent about him? Perhaps she suspected that her sister entertained an attachment for him, and disapproved of it; perhaps she entertained one for him herself, and did not wish it to be suspected. If this was so in either case, and Mr. Tremenhere had any inkling of it, the provisions of his will, the lawyer admitted to himself, were not so strange as he had thought them to be. Under such circumstances, if that document came to be disputed, it struck him—and the idea evoked his grimmest smile—that the Court would be inclined to indorse the intentions of the testator. Nevertheless, it was a cruel will; and now that he had come to know and like one of the three persons whose destinies were affected by it, it seemed to him more cruel than ever. As he had told Miss Grace, he did not want her father's thanks, but he was not without hopes that the service he had rendered to his favorite daughter might induce the money-lender to listen to those remonstrances on the matter he had intended to have made in any case, but which had now personal feeling to back them, as well as a sense of right.

That Mr. Roscoe had left Grace to his protection in the concert-hall was a source of self-congratulation, but that he had apparently made his choice as to which of the two sisters he should save, and had chosen the other, gave him a still keener sense of satisfaction. It was clear, at least, that the man had no matrimonial designs upon Josh's little Fairy. Had it been otherwise, the lawyer almost felt that he would have defended Mr. Tremenhere's will at his own expense rather than have permitted it be "upset." But what would become of the little Fairy as it was? This thought occupied Mr. Allerton's mind to an extent that would have astonished his clients, could they have been aware of it, exceedingly; some of them would doubtless have even gone so far as to say, "Why, this old fool has actually fallen in love with a young girl!" They would have done him, however, a great injustice. He was not even actuated by that sentimental emotion, not at all uncommon with gentlemen of his years in relation to young persons of the other sex, which is termed (somewhat too contemptuously, perhaps) philandering. His feelings towards Grace were not only platonic and paternal, but had

their root in what was best in his nature, without the narrowness and conventionality that clung to his best. Her courage, her gentleness, and her simplicity had carried the old lawyer's heart, though not by storm; her beauty, of course, had also been a powerful ally, but his thoughts about it were quite unselfish. Strangely enough, they were now vaguely travelling on the same road which those of Mr. Tremenhere had gone some hours ago, when busied with the future of his little Fairy. The lawyer wondered whether it was possible that a certain young fellow, of whom he knew a great deal, not much to his credit, but still had some hopes of, could be won from his wild ways by love and innocence; and if so, what a chance there might be for him! It was probable that he had seen Grace, and if so, it was certain that she must have had attractions for him. There would be enormous obstacles, of course, but there would also be immense advantages in such a union. There were reasons why a man of Mr. Allerton's principles should not have dreamed of such a contingency; as one, indeed, with a genuine respect and admiration for the young lady in question, it seemed almost incredible that he should do so; and to do him justice, but for those hopes of amendment in the young fellow he had in his mind, and which he perhaps unconsciously exaggerated, he would have regarded such a scheme with scorn.

But Mr. Allerton, as we have said, was a lawyer to his finger-tips, and the idea of re-establishing a great estate, and refurbishing a noble name from which not a little of the gilt had been rubbed off, had an attraction for him such as few laymen can understand. In the case supposed, however, which was (indirectly) that of a client of his own, it would be necessary to drive a coach and horses through the will of another client, which was of course utterly out of the question—a reflection that brought him round to the point from which his speculations had started, that he must persuade Mr. Joseph Tremenhere to alter his will.

CHAPTER XI.

AN UNEXPECTED CLIENT.

One of the great charms of romance, to my mind, is its opportunism. The novelist's characters do not live actually longer than people in real life; there are very few centenarians in our love-tales; but they die just when they ought to die—generally all in a lump (with the exception of the hero and heroine and the very good people) at the end of the third volume.

What is the *good* of describing an individual with great accuracy and considerable detail if he is to be cast off in an early chapter? This is one of the reasons why the realms of fiction are so much more pleasant to dwell in than the real world, where those whom the gods—and ourselves—love die young. Unhappily our present story is very far from a romance, being about what ordinary folks call money, and the more excellent persons who despise it, Mammon. We are therefore obliged to take people in it as we find them, and occasionally to take them away. Charles the Second excused himself to his weeping court because he was "such an unconscionable time in dying," but the narrator of a story of real life seems to owe an apology to his readers for killing off his characters too soon.

On the very morning after the events narrated in the previous chapter a letter arrived for Mr. Allerton by hand at his private address, for he had not yet left his house, to inform him that "Josh" was dead. The letter was written by Mr. Roscoe, and ran thus:

"My dear Sir,—It is with the utmost sorrow that I have to inform you that your late client, Mr. Joseph Tremenhere, died suddenly last night, or rather this morning, within a few hours of your having quitted his house. Yours truly, Edward Roscoe.

"Bearer waits."

The note was very brief, and on that account, in the lawyer's eyes, very significant. The news it brought shocked him more than—a week ago—he would have conceived it possible for it to have done.

Of course he did not like the money-lender, and even now could almost have said he was better out of the world than in it. But he felt no inclination to say anything of the kind. His last relations with him had been friendly, and somehow, though he had most seriously differed from him even in that interview, he seemed to have gathered from it that there was at least more good in the man than he had ever suspected. He had been a man of his word, and was, so far, trustworthy; he had shown himself open to reason, and not utterly deaf to conscience; it was possible—the lawyer, with unconscious charity, even represented to himself that it was probable—that if he had lived he would have taken a larger and a better view of his responsibilities. It was too late for that now, of course; too late, alas, for everything! but the reflection softened the lawyer's heart towards him, or rather towards his memory. At once, too, the same thought occurred to him (though it evoked in his case no smile of satire) which had occurred to the dead man when he last left the lawyer's door. What would become of that team of thorough-breds which the money-lender had held so well in hand, now that death had dragged him from the box-seat? What would become of Lord Cheribert, for one, now that he had lost that guiding hand which, if it had never kept him straight, had restrained him with bit and curb from leaping into the gulf of ruin? Lord Morella, his father, indeed, was of opinion that "Josh" had put his head to it, and urged him thither with rein and whip, but Mr. Allerton knew better. There were many worse hands into which the young man might have fallen, and now probably would fall.

For the present, however, the catastrophe that had happened to Josh himself loomed most largely in the lawyer's mind. It is the privilege of death to oust for the moment all other considerations; all other objects of interest are dwarfed in its tremendous presence; and the old lawyer, even while speculating about the consequences of the event, was held in thrall by the event itself. Mr. Tremenhere's death, however sudden, was not, of course, a thing to be wondered at, for he had foretold it with his own lips.

"I shall have no death-bed," he had said; "I shall die suddenly—very likely in the street."

Nor would it have been surprising if he had heard on the previous night of the fire in the concert-hall, and been made anxious for the safety of his children, that he should have fallen a victim to mental excitement. But he had known nothing of this till all apprehension was over, and his family had been warned to break to him what had

happened with the utmost care. It was doubtless some mental shock that killed him; but what shock? He had died that morning, it seemed, but very early, "within a few hours," wrote Mr. Roscoe, "of your having quitted his house." That must have been about two or three o'clock. Was it possible that, in spite of the necessity for precaution of which they had been informed, any of his family could have awakened him and told their news? Though brevity might have been looked for in Mr. Roscoe's note, it seemed to the lawyer brief without being concise. And then there was the phrase "your late client," which appeared wholly unnecessary. He had only had one transaction with the money-lender in his life (though, indeed, it was a most important one) as regarded his private affairs, and he felt quite certain that Mr. Tremenhere had not spoken of it to his underling. It must, therefore, have been Miss Agnes that had done so; a strange thing, under the circumstances, in itself, to be talking "during the small hours," when there was a so much more inthralling theme to discuss, about business affairs; but that Mr. Roscoe should have alluded to it was still more strange. Mr. Allerton's best explanation of it was that the information given him by Miss Agnes seemed of such prodigious importance to Mr. Roscoe that he couldn't get it out of his mind, even when announcing the catastrophe. It would have seemed reasonable enough that the dead man should have been described as his client if Mr. Allerton's presence had been requested at Lebanon Lodge, since some relation between Mr. Tremenhere and himself must have been taken for granted for the invitation to be given. But no such request had been made. On the other hand, something was evidently expected of him by the phrase "bearer waits." What that meant seemed to be, "you may come or not as you please." Had Roscoe written the note of his own head, he wondered, or had the "little Fairy," with the recollection of his kindness to her still vivid, asked him to do so? That it was Roscoe's composition was certain. "What the fellow wants," was the lawyer's conclusion, "is to lie low, and to make me show my hand."

In order to show as little as possible to begin with, he gave a verbal reply to the messenger to the effect that he would be at Lebanon Lodge in one hour, and took a cab to his office, which was on the way. The dead can always wait, and not to look in at his place of business was an unnecessary act of abnegation; but it was not of business that the lawyer thought as he sat in his hansom. He thought of an innocent girl with tender eyes and gentle looks

who, after her first burst of sorrow was over, would be dependent upon him, in what would perhaps be very difficult circumstances, for advice and succor, and he made up his mind that they should not be wanting.

His chief clerk opened the door of his office to him; he had been waiting to do it for the last ten minutes. "You have heard the news, sir, I suppose?" he said, respectfully.

Mr. Allerton nodded gravely, much to the other's disgust; no one likes the wind—even though it be an ill wind—to be taken out of his sails. He had, however, a second shot in his locker, which "told" even beyond his expectations.

"Lord Cheribert, sir, is waiting for you."

"Indeed!" The lawyer was more than astonished; the visit was most unexpected, for he had always been upon the side of Lord Morella, and adverse (though, of course, for his own good) to his heir-apparent; but there was an association of ideas in his mind besides, which made what was now told him more astounding still.

He walked into his private room with rapid steps. Lord Cheribert rose from the chair on which he had been sitting, and frankly held out his hand; his manner was friendly and even cordial, but it had none of its usual elasticity.

"Poor old Josh is dead, Allerton," he said, simply.

"So I have heard, my lord."

"Don't milord me, I beg; let us have none of that rubbish. You have no grudge against me, I know, and I want to be friends."

"I was always your friend, Lord Cheribert—"

"I ask you again to drop that jargon," interrupted the young fellow. "Why, I can remember when you used to call me Cherry."

"So can I," sighed Mr. Allerton; nor was it so very long since he had done so. The picture of the charming child, in his Vandyke suit of velvet, hand in hand with the sweet lady whose only quarrel with death was that it parted her from her darling boy, recurred to him. If she had lived to lead the lad by love, and soften his father's ways towards him, his future might have been different; but, as it was, it was well that she could not foresee it. There was a look of her still in his eyes when they were at rest, and in his winning smile; the smile, General Saint-Gatien used to say, was the only winning thing about young Cheribert, for whatever he put his money on he was sure to lose it. No one of his rank—for the fortunes of vulgar millionaires melt away on the turf more quickly than those of the well-born, probably because they have more people to look after

them—had ever got through so much money so early and in such a little time. Nor was the way in which he had got through it by any means respectable; in the lawyer's view, with that streak of Puritanism running through his respectable nature, it was disgraceful, and even something more. Yet he could not help liking the young fellow. The expression of his face was always attractive, but just now it had a certain tender seriousness which Mr. Allerton had never seen in it before.

"I must confess the thing has knocked me all of a heap," said the young lord, apologetically. "Old Josh was a better fellow than you think, Mr. Allerton, and very kind to me. Yes, you may laugh" —the other had smiled ever so slightly—"but it was so. Of course he made his pile out of me; so would any man who had the plucking of such a well-feathered bird; but there are different ways of doing it. I have sometimes thought that he really liked me—treated me tenderly, as the angler says of his worm. At all events, if you please, I don't want to have a word said against him," he added, impetuously.

"I am not going to say a word against him, Cheribert," said the lawyer, softly. "What you have said is his best epitaph, and I have nothing to add to it except this—that I agree with you."

"And yet you have always told me that he was such a blackguard!"

"If I have, I retract it. We often say things, as we do things, which we are afterwards sorry for. No man is wise at all times—nor yet a fool."

"You cunning old fellow," continued Lord Cheribert, admiringly. "So you are making things easy for me, are you? Well, it is better than making things hard. It is a pity the governor has never seen that."

"Your father has always loved you, Cheribert."

"Then he has a deuced disagreeable way of showing it," was the quick reply. "A man should know how to put his foot down without treading on another man's toe; when it's his own flesh and blood, too, he should be more careful."

"He has been very injudicious, Cheribert, as I have often told him. Men should make allowance for one another."

"And a good one when they can afford it," interrupted the other, laughing.

The lawyer was pleased to see him laugh; he had guessed the young man's errand, or the nature of it, and it filled him with joyful

hopes; the bird had come back to the cage of its own accord, but he was not inside it; an ill-selected word, even a gesture, might, he well knew, frighten it away, and probably forever. Seed and sugar, sugar and seed, were what were wanting, and not the coin of reproach.

"You and your father are of very different natures, Cheribert; and if, as you say, he has not made allowance for you, perhaps you too have judged him harshly."

"The strictest sect of the Pharisees," observed the young man, grimly.

"Quite so; that is how you *have* judged him; it is a mistake."

"It is a mistake that is shared by a great many people. I hate such cant."

"No doubt; still, in that very chair where you are now sitting I have seen him sit, with his gray head bowed down, and I have heard him say, 'My son, my son, my dear, unhappy son!' *That* was not cant."

There was a long silence. Once the young man essayed to speak, and stopped; there was something in the tone of his voice which his pride forbade him to let the other hear.

"Well, I could not come to *him*, of course, Allerton, but I have come to you. You have always been friendly to me, and ready to listen to reason, or what *I* call reason," he added, with humorous pathos. "I don't want him to suppose that I am crying *Pax*, as we used to say at school, because I am beaten. I could carry on a long time yet without being reduced to husks, like the other prodigal."

"If you *were* so reduced you would not come to him at all," observed Mr. Allerton, quietly.

"That's true," continued the young man, eagerly; "I'd starve first. You understand me, Allerton, as he never did. I'm glad I came. I don't mean to say that I would have done it if poor old Josh had been in the land of the living. But his death—so sudden, you know, and all that—it's sobered me. I have never wished the governor to die; I swear to Heaven I never did."

"I am quite sure, Cheribert, that you never did."

"Thank you. And yet he might die any day, you know, and never see me first. I can't go into the thing—you and he could talk for an hour about it, but it's not in my way—but *that's* at the bottom of it. That first; and then, now that Josh is gone, and supposing things go on in the old way, I must go quicker down the hill,

and in worse company. Roscoe has often hinted he could do as well for me as his master; but he can't, and the very proposal showed he was a most infernal scoundrel!"

"There are also corroborative circumstances to that effect," observed Mr. Allerton, dryly.

"I dare say; he told me, however," said the young lord, smiling, "that I was never to believe anything you said about him."

"I dare say," said the lawyer, smiling in his turn. He felt that his new client and he were getting on famously.

"Well, the long and short of it is, Allerton, that I propose to put my whole affairs—so much as I know about them, that is, which isn't much—into your hands. They are in a precious tangle, but perhaps it may be worth your while—nay, I won't say *that*—but, perhaps, for the sake of auld lang-syne—"

"Not another word, Cherry," said the old lawyer, tremulously; and the two men shook hands together as they had not done for many a day.

CHAPTER XII.

MYSTERIES.

"MAY I tell your father of this most welcome visit of yours?" inquired Mr. Allerton, after a long pause.

"Yes. Indeed, I took it for granted that you'd tell him."

"You are my client, remember, now," said the lawyer, smiling. There was a little duplicity in the good man's reply, since he would most certainly have told Lord Morella in any case, but it is probable that the Recording Angel blotted it out in his usual way, or even set it down to the credit side of the lawyer's account. It was so necessary to inspire confidence in this newly caged bird, who had to be kept as well as caught.

"True. I am glad to hear you talk like that, for there are little items in my affairs which it is just as well should go no further than yourself."

"I can imagine that that is just possible," said the lawyer, gravely. "Be sure that I shall use a judicious reticence concerning them, even to your father. What you have done to-day will, I am sure, rejoice him exceedingly. But, Cheribert, there is a great deal more to be done to effect a complete reconciliation."

"Promises of amendment, and all that; well, I suppose so." The young man's brow was clouding over.

"*Promises* of amendment from your lips, Cheribert, would *be* amendment," said the lawyer, kindly; "like poor 'Josh,' as you call him, you have always kept your word, I am sorry to say."

Lord Cheribert smiled his sunniest smile. Here is a man, he said to himself, who is a lawyer and a Puritan, and yet has some fun in him. "Well, yes. I told the governor I should go to the devil, and I did it; as to any promise about going the other way, that must depend upon circumstances."

"You know your father's conditions."

"Some of them. He seemed to me to be an anti-everything man. I must give up whist and tobacco and wine and promiscuous dancing; and, if I wanted to ride, to take to the tricycle."

"Indeed, Cheribert, he was not so unreasonable. Whatever he proposed, remember he had been very sorely tried. If you will let me mediate, I do think matters may be arranged. There is one thing, however, which is indispensable."

"*I* know," said Lord Cheribert, with a gloomy nod; "I must give up the turf. No more strings of horses at Newmarket; no more pretty little books upon the Derby. Well, I am prepared for that."

"I am delighted indeed to hear it," exclaimed the lawyer, warmly, "and of course there will be no more riding steeple-chases."

"No more after the Everdale. I must ride there, however; some friends of mine have a pot of money on me. The race has been postponed on account of the duke's death, and it will be the last of the season—and if this matter goes well with me, the last I shall ever ride."

"But if money can settle it—even a pot of money, as you call it—I am sure your father would prefer to pay it, and shake hands with you at once."

Lord Cheribert shook his head and smiled. "My dear Allerton, there are some things, believe me, which don't admit of compromise, at least beforehand. Moreover, I have promised a man to ride this race; after that, if my father is willing to say 'let by-gones be by-gones,' well and good; I will come and stay a while at the old home; otherwise I have promised myself some fishing at Halswater."

"At Halswater! That is in Cumberland, is it not?" inquired the lawyer, after a little pause.

"Yes, in the Lake district. I have never been there," observed the young man, with an earnestness of assertion which seemed unnecessary.

"I seem to remember having heard that Mr. Tremenhere had a house at Halswater; is that so?"

"I believe he had," returned the other, indifferently; "poor Josh was not very communicative about his own affairs."

"And I suppose you were never on terms of intimacy with his family?"

"Certainly not. I have been, however, introduced to his daughters."

"So have I," said Mr. Allerton; "one of them I thought a very charming girl."

"That was Grace—at least I think it must have been," added the young man, dubiously; "she is the youngest. How came *you* to know anything about them?"

"I will tell you about it another time, for it's rather a long story, Cheribert. I am Mr. Tremenhere's executor, and am likely to see a good deal of them."

"Mr. Tremenhere's executor? *You?*"

"Yes. I didn't like the post, you may be sure, but I do not now regret my acceptance of it; it may simplify the settlement of your own affairs. The story, as I have said, is a long one, and also very strange, but I have no time to speak of it now. When I looked in at the office this morning it was on my way to Lebanon Lodge."

"Then you will see the poor girl."

"All three of them, perhaps; but the summons came from Mr. Roscoe."

"Pray say something kind from me, Allerton," said the young man, earnestly; "I really liked poor old Josh, you know; and of course I cannot call myself just yet."

The pressure of the young man's hand at parting seemed to the lawyer to speak of something more than reconciliation; it seemed to say, "I know you will say the best you can of me to Grace." It was very unlike Mr. Allerton to jump at conclusions, but his mind, as we know, had been busy with this matter before, although but speculatively; the news of Lord Cheribert's intention to visit Halswater struck him as very significant; and still more that slip of the tongue when the young man had spoken of the poor "girl" instead of the poor "girls." That the little Fairy should have attracted him was nothing wonderful. Yet, after all, what could come of it, with that will lying in the office safe yonder, and the Dead Hand?

Mr. Allerton had much more to think about for the rest of the way to Lebanon Lodge than he had had at starting.

The great house, gazing on the street with its many sightless eyes, was a ghastly object; all about it was silence and gloom; when he rang the bell he heard the tinkle of it, though it was so far away, as though it had been on the other side of the door. It was opened, after a long delay, by a young footman, pale and dishevelled, and looking as if he had been frightened by the sound.

"Can I see Mr. Roscoe?" inquired the lawyer.

The man did not know: he would go up-stairs and see: master was dead.

Mr. Allerton bowed his head in token that he knew that much. The footman hesitated, apparently as to whether the visitor should be left in the hall, and then pushed back a half-opened door. Perhaps the gentleman would wait there a minute or two, he said, and left him. It was the same room, used chiefly by Mr. Roscoe, where Grace had met him and her sister on the previous night. As Mr. Allerton entered it a voice half choked with tears exclaimed, "I have killed him: it is I who killed him!" It came from a sofa hidden in shadow. Then, as he stood speechless with surprise and horror, another voice, though still the same lips, a fierce yet frightened voice, "How *dare* you come in here? Who *are* you?" At the same time the speaker sprang from the sofa, and he found himself face to face with Philippa Tremenhere. Her eyes, streaming with tears, stared wildly at him; her cheeks were white; she trembled in every limb.

"I am Mr. Allerton," he answered, gently. "The servant showed me in here. Forgive me for intruding on your sorrow."

"Nay, forgive *me*, sir," she answered, earnestly. "My sorrow has almost driven me mad. I did not recognize you. It was kind of you to come." She took his hand and pressed it. In her case, too, as in Lord Cheribert's, he felt that there was more than gratitude: a pitiful appeal to him for silence. He had heard something he should not have heard. He was about to leave the room, but she detained him. "Sit down," she said, "your presence does not distress me. Do not leave me."

He sat down by her side, his hand still clasped in hers.

"You know what has happened?" she continued.

"I do, indeed. It must have been a terrible shock to you, for you were not prepared for it as I was."

"That is true," she answered, eagerly, "you warned us of his danger, did you not? but it seemed too dreadful to be true. We were careful, too. There was no noise. We all thought my poor

father was asleep. We meant to break to him what had happened in the morning. Yet somehow, as Mr. Roscoe and I—" here she burst into a passion of tears, and covered her face with her hands.

"You must not talk about it, Miss Philippa," said the lawyer, gently. "I shall hear all that needs to be told from others—here is Mr. Roscoe himself."

That gentleman had, indeed, entered the room so noiselessly that neither of them had perceived his approach; he stood, white as a ghost, but with keen, steadfast face, looking from one to the other searchingly.

"Miss Philippa has been telling you how it happened, I conclude," he said; "it is a pity, for she is not in a fit state to speak of it."

"So I perceive, and, indeed, was saying so as you came in," said the lawyer. "Would it not be better for her to be with her sisters?" he added, in lower tones.

Mr. Roscoe shrugged his shoulders. "That was my advice to her from the first; but there is no authority, of course, in the house now. You hear what Mr. Allerton says, Miss Philippa?"

She shook her head, still keeping her hands before her face. Mr. Roscoe beckoned the lawyer into a room on the other side of the hall, and closed the door.

"The poor girl is demented with her grief," he said. "You must pay no attention to what she has been saying about her father."

"She has been saying nothing; you came in as she was beginning to tell me the sad story. What was it?"

"Simply this. The young ladies and myself sat up some time together after you left the house last night, talking of what had happened at the concert-hall. I wished them good-night, and went into yonder parlor—which is my business-room—to write some letters. About two o'clock I went up-stairs; as I passed by Mr. Tremenhere's door, treading very softly, he came out. I own it startled me very much. He looked very agitated and excited. 'What has happened?' he said. 'I can see by your face that something has happened, and is being kept from me.' Then he uttered a sharp cry of pain, and fell down at my feet—dead! The whole thing did not take one minute."

"Then he had not even heard of the fire?"

"Not one word."

"How strange!" The tale seemed strange, indeed; for it did

away with the explanation which the lawyer had already made in his own mind for that amazing exclamation of Philippa, evidently intended for Mr. Roscoe's ears: "I have killed him: it is I who killed him!" He had set this down to a too tender feeling of remorse on her part; since, if she had not been at the concert, she would not have been at the fire, the report of which catastrophe—as he had taken for granted—had killed Mr. Tremenhere; but now, it seemed, he had not been told of its occurrence.

"You were quite alone, then?" continued the lawyer.

"Quite alone; every one else had long retired. It was a most ghastly situation, as you may imagine."

Mr. Allerton inclined his head. This man said he was alone, but Philippa had begun her narration "as Mr. Roscoe and I," which did not dovetail with this statement.

The whole affair was certainly very strange. There ensued a little pause, during which the two men regarded one another thoughtfully. But they were not thinking about the same things. Mr. Roscoe looked upon his late explanation as final; there appeared to him no reason for further question. His mind was fixed no longer upon the recent catastrophe, but on its consequences.

"I suppose I am right in concluding, Mr. Allerton—as indeed I took for granted in the note I ventured to write to you—that I am addressing Mr. Tremenhere's legal adviser; perhaps, even, his representative?"

"Yes; I am executor under his will."

"Indeed!" Though the other had suspected this, his countenance fell.

"He could not have chosen a better, a more upright man. At the same time, you will forgive me for feeling a little disappointment. He and I have been so long connected together. He knew me so well."

The lawyer could hardly restrain a flicker of the lip; the retort, "that was the very reason why he did not choose you for his executor," suggested itself so very naturally.

"I may assure you, Mr. Roscoe," he answered, dryly, "though the information is a little premature, that you have no reason to be disappointed with Mr. Tremenhere's will."

"Oh, I was not thinking of *that*, Mr. Allerton. It is pleasant, of course, to hear that one has been remembered, as the phrase goes, by an old friend; but I should have preferred a proof—though a less material one—of the confidence he always reposed in me."

This was too much for the lawyer. It seemed to him that his intelligence was being trifled with, and he resented it.

"I don't know what you call remembered, Mr. Roscoe. Perhaps you are thinking of a mourning ring. Mr. Tremenhere has left you a very large legacy. He said something about your having saved his life."

Here occurred a very remarkable circumstance; the blood rushed into Mr. Roscoe's cheeks in a crimson flood.

"I don't expect to be believed," the old lawyer used to say in narrating the fact, "and unfortunately there was no witness, but I do assure you the fellow blushed." There was a good reason for it, though the lawyer never found it out; but he felt that there *was* a reason, and it puzzled him more than anything that had gone before.

"Here is Mr. Tremenhere's check-book and his banker's account," said Mr. Roscoe, producing them; "here are the keys—"

"Never mind the keys," said the lawyer, motioning them away; "give them to Miss Tremenhere. How is she, by-the-bye, and Miss Grace?"

"They are both utterly overwhelmed and prostrated by their calamity," returned Mr. Roscoe, "just as you saw poor Miss Philippa to be."

There was a knock at the door, and the butler entered. He addressed himself to Mr. Allerton. "Miss Grace's regards, sir, and if you will kindly see her for a few minutes before you leave the house, she will be obliged to you."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BEREAVED.

This message of the butler's, though inconsistent with the information just imparted by Mr. Roscoe, did not embarrass that gentleman in the least. He had already, though involuntarily, shown not a little weakness, and doubtless repented of it; he was not likely to make the same mistake again.

"You are honored indeed, Mr. Allerton," he observed, smiling. "When I saw Miss Grace myself an hour or so ago she seemed unequal to an interview with any one; but she and you have had an experience together such as may well make a friend of a stranger."

The lawyer nodded stiffly. This reference to the fire at the concert-room, considering how the speaker had conducted himself on the occasion in question, struck him as rather impudent; and the more so since he was convinced that it was the consciousness of his ill-behavior which had caused the man to avoid him after their escape. Without making any reply, he followed the butler to the drawing-room.

It was an immense apartment, looking much larger by daylight than it had done the previous night, and made the "little Fairy" (nobody's little Fairy now, alas!), perched on a huge sofa at the far end of it, more child-like to behold than ever. Yet as she rose to meet him he saw that grief had already aged her. A few tears rose to her eyes, but the passion of sorrow, such as he had seen in Philippa, had passed away, and, like a mountain torrent after "spate," left its marks upon the unaccustomed road.

"How kind and good of you to come!" she murmured.

"Nay, my child, it is kind of you to wish to see me," he answered, gently.

"How could I help it, since you were his friend?" she said, with mournful tenderness.

Her mistake was more touching, in the lawyer's view, than any other thing which filial love could have prompted her to say. She was in ignorance, it was clear, not only of his own relations with the dead man, but doubtless of much else concerning that father who, whatever had been his faults, had dearly loved his child; and, however difficult might be the task, Mr. Allerton made up his mind that, as regarded them, his lips at least should be kept sealed, whatever she might hear of them from others.

"I want you to talk to me a little about him," she continued, plaintively; "it is the only comfort left to me, and yet they tell me it is better not to do so."

"Who tells you that?"

"Mr. Roscoe."

The advice, as he could not but feel, was good; the less said about poor "Josh" the better, was what he would have observed himself, had he been asked his opinion; and especially would he have said it, had it been possible, to this poor girl, for whom the revelation of the truth would open the floodgates of undreamed of shame.

"Mr. Roscoe is right, my child," said the lawyer, gently. "It is wrong to melt the heart which is already as wax in the fire by

speaking of our grief to others; with those who, like yourself, belong to him—with your sisters—it is of course but natural that you should speak of your father, but—"

"I cannot speak of him to them," she interrupted, sadly.

"Why not? Are they not kind to you?"

"Yes; they are kind enough," she sighed. "But Philippa—I don't know what has come to Philippa — she shuts herself away from us; and Agnes—Agnes, though she does not mean it, seems a little hard. What is the use of crying? she says. And indeed it is no use; but dear papa, who loved me so much better than I deserved, is gone, and I am all alone."

It was clear that she was so, but why she was so it was difficult to explain. In the case of such a domestic catastrophe as had just occurred it seemed only natural that the chief sufferers—the dead man's daughters—should have found comfort in the interchange of their common woe; how strange it seemed that, on the contrary, they should thus shrink from one another! How hard, especially, that this one, so much younger than the other two, should be left alone with her misery, without a word of sympathy, as it would appear, from either of them! Perhaps they were jealous of her, and resented the place she had held in her father's affections, and felt themselves no great sorrow for what had happened. Yet Philippa was plunged in sorrow, and, indeed, in something which looked even deeper than sorrow—remorse. Could it be the consciousness of having behaved undutifully to the dead man that had caused her to express herself in such strange terms? But if she was penitent on that account, the most natural and obvious way of showing it would surely have been to do all she could to comfort the sister who had been so dear to him. There was a mystery about the whole matter which Mr. Allerton could not fathom. His attempts at consolation were necessarily made at hap-hazard, and of the conventional type.

"What you ought to ask yourself, my dear," he said, tenderly, "since you are left to your own judgment, is, what sort of behavior, if your poor father could see you, would please him most? It is natural that you should bewail your loss, but he would not wish his 'little Fairy,' I am sure, to weep her eyes away."

"Is there anything he would like me to do?" she inquired, eagerly; "any one to benefit, as he was always so ready to do? But then he was so wise and powerful, and I am so foolish and helpless."

"I don't think you foolish, my dear," said the lawyer; "and you

certainly are not helpless. Your father has taken good care of that."

"Do you mean money?" she cried. "What's the use of money when one has lost all one loves in the world?"

There was an indignation in her tone that seemed uncalled for. They have been talking to her already, some of them, about money, was the lawyer's conclusion. How could it have been otherwise in this Temple of Mammon?

"The use of money, my child, is to do good to others."

"True; as *he* did; I should have remembered that," she answered, gently. "There will be many to lament him, though not as I do. They know about it, do you think, poor people?"

The notion of Mr. Joseph Tremenhere's loss being looked upon by a large mass of mankind as that of a public benefactor was a travesty of the truth, such as under any other circumstances would have provoked the lawyer's grimmest smile. He smiled even as it was, though far from grimly.

"I know one who does," he answered; "he called on me this morning to express his sorrow, and bade me offer to you and your sisters, should I have the opportunity, his heart-felt sympathy."

"Who was it? Let me know his name," she answered, eagerly.

"It was Lord Cheribert."

"How good of him!" she exclaimed, gratefully. "I know papa used to like him. In his case, too, it could not, of course, have been the mere sense of obligation. It must have been because he knew how kind and good dear papa was."

"He had as high an opinion of your father as any man I know," said the lawyer. He could say that much with perfect truth; but such interrogations, if pursued, would, he felt, become embarrassing in the extreme. "I must leave you now, my dear, and I hope in a less despairing state of mind. You know where we should all look for comfort when sorrow overwhelms us."

The last reminder was rather a difficulty with Mr. Allerton. To a Christian girl he would have known better what to say; but his "views" were narrow. He had not much sympathy with Jews, except for the converted ones, and for those he subscribed liberally.

"This is my address, in case you should wish to send for me. You will not be sorry to hear, I hope, that your father has appointed me, until you come of age, your guardian."

"That is good news indeed," she cried, and a grateful smile for

It was strange indeed, thought the lawyer, that Miss Agnes should thus talk of missing any one, and yet not have had a word to say about her father. At that very moment, however, she remedied the omission.

"I suppose, Mr. Allerton, there will be no necessity for an inquest?"

"I think not; the doctor whom your father consulted will of course be at once communicated with, and will notify the cause of death."

"That is some comfort," said Miss Agnes, with a sigh of relief. "Of course I should like to talk to you about many things, Mr. Allerton," she continued, wistfully, "but this is hardly the proper time."

"I think that had better be postponed for the present," he answered.

"I suppose so," she replied, but in by no means an approving tone. "Whenever you think proper, I shall be pleased to see you. A thousand thanks—take care of the step—good-bye."

CHAPTER XIV.

GOOD ADVICE.

It has been stated by a physician of experience that more persons are put out of the world without discovery, in that square mile of which Belgrave Square is the centre, than elsewhere in all England, the inhabitants of that region being peculiarly liable to temptation to that crime, from the system of primogeniture and other causes, and also too highly placed to be troubled by the vulgar interference of a coroner's inquest. It should be some compensation to middle-class people living, for example, at Kensington to reflect that they cannot be cut off prematurely by their nearest relatives without some stir being made about it; and it may be taken for granted, since there was no inquest upon the body of Mr. Tremenhere, that that gentleman needed none. It was understood, and very properly so, since nothing could be urged to the contrary, that he died of heart complaint, as the eminent doctor whom he had consulted had expected him to do. But though there was no debate as to the cause of his death, there was talk enough about the deceased him-

self, and many an attractive "par." he made for the newspapers. It was not everybody, it appeared, who had known him that knew "Josh" was a Hebrew, till his burial in the Jewish cemetery at Kensal Green put that matter beyond question. He had certainly not been ostentatious in professing the faith of his fathers, and no one except Mr. Allerton had any idea what a stickler he had been for it.

In the mean time, of course, his wealth was trebled. If you laid it down in sovereigns, as one ingenious reporter alleged, it would have reached from the Land's End to John o' Groat's; another, not to be outdone, added, "edgewise." Perpendicularly in a pile, it would, very nearly, have touched the moon. These calculations, so obviously exaggerated, and also differing so materially from one another, nevertheless delighted the public. They would stand in knots opposite the red brick house, shading their eyes with their hands, and point out to one another the room—the curtained one with the window open—where the dead man lay with the lonely "watcher" by his side, guarding, after the manner of his race, what needed no longer custody.

No departed greatness, whether of genius or virtue, could have excited one-tenth of the interest that hung round the dead master of millions; but whither his millions had gone interested them vastly more than his own destination—which, by most, indeed, was taken for granted. "His worst he kept, his best he gave," could have been justly said of him, if not quite in the sense intended by the poet. Poor Josh! His name, like Cæsar's, a week ago could have stood against the world—or, more prosaically, had been "good" for anything; and now it was a by-word. Songs were made upon it, as Falstaff threatened to make upon his adversary, and sung in the streets to popular airs: ignoble thoughts wedded to transitory melodies. Mr. Edward Roscoe, who had left Lebanon Lodge, and whom business made peripatetic, would sometimes involuntarily listen to them in quiet streets, not knowing whether to smile or to frown.

How *could* he know till the will had been read? There were so many things to be considered before he could look at the memory of his deceased friend in the proper light. Personally, he had disliked him exceedingly, and of late much more than ever; but he was not a man to be influenced by prejudice of that kind. He took much broader views. He knew from Mr. Allerton that Josh had left him what the lawyer evidently considered to be a large sum, but he might not be a good judge of size in that respect; Mr. Allerton

disliked him—Mr. Roscoe looked matters of this kind in the face—and would have grudged him his legacy, whatever it was. Still, it was doubtless a considerable sum, for Josh had been liberal, and even lavish on some occasions; and this had been given him, as the lawyer had told him, for saving his life—unbuttoning his shirt-collar and giving him brandy on a certain momentous occasion.

This was a matter which Mr. Roscoe did not look in the face; for particular reasons of his own, the contemplation of it was exceedingly distasteful to him. He kept his thoughts as much as possible fixed on the legacy itself. If it was really large, that, of course, would be so far satisfactory; but, on the other hand, its very size was, from another point of view, to be deprecated. It might have been left to him not out of gratitude alone, but as a species of compensation for the extinction of certain hopes which Mr. Tremenhere had, he knew, suspected him of entertaining. "Here is your money," the testator seemed to be saying to him; "more than you expected, and ten times more than you deserved; but I have taken care that you get nothing more out of me, or of my family; your connection with them henceforth ceases, and is at an end forever."

Mr. Roscoe not only possessed a keen intelligence, but a knowledge which is falsely reported to be extremely rare—he knew himself, and even saw himself to some extent as others saw him; and he saw himself pretty much as Josh had seen him. This naturally gave him great uneasiness. He had long ago taken such measures as were possible to him to make him independent of the opinion of his deceased friend; but strong, nay, extreme, measures as they had been, would they now prove sufficient? This was the question he was constantly putting to himself during these days of doubt.

He would have given a hundred pounds for one glimpse of Mr. Joseph Tremenhere's will (and if he could have read it, he would have given all he had in the world, including his legacy, to have burned it); but there was nothing for it but patience. In the handsome lodgings he had taken for himself near his late employer's residence, where he was treated with great consideration—for, if he was not the rose, the dead millionaire himself, he had been near the rose, and was supposed to possess the very secret which he yearned to learn—he passed anxious hours, sleepless nights. He had been playing for high stakes; he had a strong hand, and had played it with admirable dexterity, but he was by no means sure how the game had gone.

As to whither Mr. Joseph Tremenhere had gone, that inquiry never

so much as occurred to him. It interested him not in the least; which, considering the intimate relations that had so long existed between the two men, seems strange. And yet, how little thought do most of us give to the condition of those who have left us forever, however close have been the ties that bound us to them when they were on earth; less, upon the whole, than if they had undertaken a long journey upon this planet, and concerning whom, leaning on our garden "spud" in the summer weather, we wonder how they are getting on in New York or Melbourne. What Mr. Roscoe thought of was not Mr. Tremenhere, but Mr. Tremenhere's money; and, with one exception, everybody else was thinking, though not with so interested an anxiety, just as Mr. Roscoe did.

Even the great and good Lord Morella, though he professed some apprehensions for the sinner who had been so suddenly summoned by that messenger who brooks no delay, was much more apprehensive respecting his family property, a large amount of which had, without doubt, stuck to the dead man's hands, and helped to swell that fortune in seven figures which was attracting the admiration of the public. Mr. Allerton's temporary interest in poor Josh had utterly died away, and was transferred to his property—a matter which occupied a good deal of his attention. Notwithstanding its size, it was not unwieldy; it was, indeed, remarkably free from complications of any kind; it was the will itself that worried him. In his heart of hearts the lawyer felt that it was not only, as he had told his client, an unjust and improper will, but in point of law a doubtful one; nay, one which he would not have hesitated, if any other man had drawn it up, to call a bad will. It was liable to dispute, and on the face of it suggested dispute because of its manifest injustice. If his client had lived, Mr. Allerton was convinced, or flattered himself so, that he could have persuaded him to alter or tone down what was amiss in it. Even now it was possible, should matters turn out favorably, if the legatees should prove amenable to reason, and not be got at by interested parties, that they themselves might eventually get things arranged to their satisfaction; but if there should be opposition at first, and an antagonistic spirit, not only might the will be set aside, but, what was much more to be deplored, all the safeguards by which poor Josh had hoped to protect his property from fortune-hunters and adventurers would be swept away.

Now, though Mr. Allerton disapproved of the will, he approved, though within less narrow limits, of the safeguards; the "intention

of the testator" was sacred to him; and, as so often happens in the case of the pious founder, the lawyer's object was to carry out the wishes of his client, while at the same time avoiding the evils which a hard and fast adhesion to them would infallibly bring about. If the three heiresses (if they could be called so) would allow themselves to be ruled by him, all might still go well, he hoped; but if they were restive, or incited to antagonism by others, he foresaw trouble. He knew nothing of the influences that were at work with them, save one, and that he profoundly distrusted. His rock ahead, for the present at least, he well perceived, was Mr. Edward Roscoe. That that gentleman was on intimate terms with the family was evident; Miss Philippa had shown in his presence a total absence of self-restraint; Miss Agnes had expressed her confidence in him, and strongly, almost passionately, resented that doubt of his delicacy of feeling which the lawyer had ventured to hint. That he was a designing scoundrel Mr. Allerton was assured—his character with respect to other matters forbade him to entertain a more charitable opinion; conciliation, he felt, would be utterly thrown away upon him; it would only, as it does in the mind of every scoundrel, suggest that he was an object of fear. But to show his distrust of him would be even more dangerous; upon the whole, he concluded it would be best to treat him with apparent confidence. He was certainly a friend of the family, and, as it seemed, their only friend; next to himself, it was reasonable that they should look upon him as their adviser in matters of business. Mr. Allerton decided, therefore, to do him the compliment of asking him to hear the will read. He was not without hope that, from the manner in which Mr. Roscoe should listen to its provisions, he might gather his views on the matter, or even some hint of his future intentions; at all events, it would give that gentleman no material advantage. In a few weeks, at farthest, even if he did not receive the information at once from the ladies, which was almost certain to happen, he could read it all for a shilling at Doctors' Commons. Upon the whole, it seemed better to treat him as a friend. He therefore wrote to Mr. Roscoe, stating his intention to read the will to the three sisters on a certain day, and inviting him, as an old and valued friend of the family, to be present at that ceremony.

The day appointed was not, as usual, that of the funeral, out of regard for the ladies, who, he thought, would be too "upset" to attend to matters of business, but the day afterwards; a decision which he afterwards regretted. One at least out of the three

objects of his solicitude was not so overcome by grief as not to be anxious (though not, perhaps, from mere mercenary motives) to know how her future had been arranged for her, and the delay was not favorable to Mr. Allerton's views. She inquired the reason of it of Mr. Roscoe, and that gentleman shrugged his shoulders. "To wink with both our eyes," the poet tells us, "is easier than to think"; but to wink with one of them has an effect upon the observer equal, if not superior, in significance to speech itself; and a shrug of the shoulders is near akin to it. Mr. Roscoe's shrug spoke volumes.

"I suppose we may take it for granted," observed Agnes—for it was she who was the questioner—"that Mr. Allerton is an honest man?"

The two were alone, so that it was doubtful whether the word "we" referred to herself and her sisters, or to herself and her companion; he took it in the former sense, however.

"Well, Allerton is a lawyer," he answered, smiling; "but, honest or not, he can do nothing, one way or the other, as regards the disposition of your property; he can only be guided by the will. As to this delay, I think it very probable that he wishes by it to impress upon you the idea of his possessing a power which in fact he does not possess. He was your father's legal adviser—unfortunately or not it is impossible at present to say—but he is not yours. You are under no obligation to seek his counsel, or to take it if offered. You must be guided by circumstances."

"You mean as to our attitude to Mr. Allerton?" she answered, quickly.

Again her speech was equivocal: he had said "you," but she had said "our" where "my" would have seemed more appropriate; on the other hand, the word might have been used fitly enough in reference to herself and her sisters, and again he took it in that sense.

"Well, of course," he answered, curtly. "It is very inconvenient for those in your position to be on bad terms with those in his; if it be possible, live peaceably with all men, is a precept to be especially followed in the case of one's trustees. If you take my advice, you will be very civil to Allerton. Whatever may be the information it is his duty to impart to you to-morrow, receive it with as little emotion as possible, however distasteful it may be to you."

"Distasteful! What *do* you mean, Edward?"

There was alarm in her tone, and something more; the vehemence of her feelings had even, no doubt unconsciously, caused her to address him by his Christian name. He took no advantage of that

circumstance (which some persons—Mr. Allerton, for example—would have put down as an unexpected item to his credit) to adopt a more familiar tone. On the contrary, his manner was scrupulously grave and judicial. It was evident, however, that he was putting some restraint upon himself; and this was not unwelcome to her—she felt that it was being done for her sake.

"I mean nothing," he said. "I have no cause even to suspect anything; but others may have suspected something."

"What! my father?" she answered, with a catch in her voice, as if some one had caught her by the throat.

"For Heaven's sake, command yourself!" he exclaimed, authoritatively, almost harshly. "Yes, it is possible that your father may have been too solicitous for what he foolishly imagined was your welfare, or jealous of another's influence over you. For all we know, there may be restrictions."

"Restrictions? I don't understand you," she murmured, hoarsely.

"Why should you? It will be time enough to talk of such things, and how to evade them, when we learn of their existence; I only wished to put you on your guard. Whatever happens to-morrow, keep a good heart, show a firm face. There may be nothing the matter. You think I am cruel, but I am only cruel to be kind—Agnes."

He dropped the word, as it seemed, after a little hesitation.

"You call me by my name as if you were ashamed of it," she cried, with sudden vehemence. Her face assumed a color which was not becoming; her blue eyes glittered with passion.

"Great Heaven, what a task is mine!" exclaimed Mr. Roscoe, bitterly. "Can you not understand that it is not shame but fear that makes me prudent? You have some suspicion of me in your mind, I know; what is it?"

"I have none, or if I had it is gone," she answered, hurriedly. "Forgive me, Edward."

"I have nothing to forgive," he said, in his gentlest tones; "but if you wish to please me, lay to heart what I have said about to-morrow."

CHAPTER XV.

AN ENIGMA.

Mr. Allerton was not without his apprehensions as he went up the stairs with the will in his pocket to the drawing-room of Lebanon Lodge. He was used, of course, to "public readings" of a similar kind, but this was an exceptional occasion. He was used, also, to lady clients; and though tender-hearted and of a gallant disposition, he much preferred those of the sterner sex. Ladies are more difficult to manage in matters of business than men. They are more ignorant but more opinionated; more liable to be deceived, yet more suspicious without cause.

In the present case, what it was his duty to communicate he was well aware would not be agreeable. The three ladies were all left very well; they were immensely rich, but there were very severe conditions in restraint of marriage. There were, indeed, what are termed "gifts over" to compensate for forfeiture in this respect—ten thousand pounds apiece was to be given to each upon her marriage, let her marry whom she might—but the rest of her money was left away from her unless her husband should be of the Hebrew persuasion. Moreover, this was left to the other sisters should they remain spinsters or be married to Jews. What was especially objectionable in the arrangement was that it had been dictated, as Mr. Allerton very well knew, and the legatees must needs know still better, by no conscientious motive whatever, but for the purpose of keeping the testator's property intact, or in as few hands as possible. It was no tribute to Religion but to Mammon. No wonder, therefore, that the lawyer said to himself, "How will they take it?" as he took his seat at the gilt and gorgeous table, so ludicrously inappropriate to his present use, and produced the all-important document. His audience he found already seated: Grace on the sofa nearest to him, with Philippa's arm encircling her waist—as it struck him, in rather a stagey manner; Agnes on a chair apart, and Mr. Roscoe opposite them, on the other side of the room. The blinds were almost as closely drawn as though the house still held its departed dead, and it did not escape the lawyer's notice that the friend of the family had modestly placed

himself where the gloom was deepest. The faces of all were pale, and, with the exception of that of Grace, wore an ill-concealed air of anxiety. She had, as it afterwards appeared, expressed a wish that her presence might be spared; but this had been somewhat sharply overruled. She was old enough to understand what was to take place, she was told, and to suggest that her grief was too overwhelming to admit of her attending to her future interests was an affectation, and even a reflection upon her sisters. Philippa had volunteered to sit by her and comfort her, and she carried out her promise to the letter; every now and then she caressed her tenderly—even pitifully, as though she felt for her rather than for herself—when certain passages of the will were read, and concentrated her attention upon her almost exclusively. Grace did not return these endearments, but kept her quiet face fixed on Mr. Allerton. Agnes, too, regarded the lawyer with earnest solicitude, though at times she glanced furtively at Mr. Roscoe, who maintained an unmoved demeanor, with his chin resting on his hand.

A grim smile, however, curved his lip when Mr. Allerton read out the few words of exordium in which Joseph Tremenhere expressed his unalterable attachment to the faith of his fathers; perhaps he already guessed what was coming. Agnes looked serenely contemptuous, Philippa amazed, and even in Grace's face sat a wondering though tender surprise. Then came the restrictive clauses. Not a word was said, but they evidently produced a profound effect. Mr. Roscoe frowned and smiled—a combination which is seldom becoming, and it gave him a very ugly look. One must not say that a lady looks ugly, but Agnes, in fact, surpassed him in her expression of scornful disapproval; she even uttered an ejaculation of mingled disappointment and defiance. Philippa hid her face, which had become as pale as death, on Grace's shoulder; Grace alone remained unmoved: she seemed to listen to the bald and technical terms in which her father restricted the area of her matrimonial choice without understanding their meaning. The sense of them afterwards recurred to her, but she was, in fact, thinking of something else—not of the will, but of the testator. Once, when her name was mentioned, preceded by an affectionate epithet, the only one in the brief testament, the tears stole down her cheeks. The silence, though on the whole it was welcome to the reader, who certainly expected "sensation" rather than "applause," oppressed the lawyer himself. It was almost a relief to him when, near the conclusion of the document, where it set forth, on certain contingencies, the whole of the

testator's enormous wealth was to revert to Robert Vernon, Mr. Roscoe inquired, in his gentlest accents:

"Pray, sir, who *is* he?"

"Ah, who, indeed?" added Agnes, bitterly.

Mr. Allerton gave the desired information, so far as he was possessed of it, and then concluded his task.

"It is an infamy!" observed Agnes, by way of commentary.

Mr. Roscoe lifted his finger; and though it was plain she had plenty to say, she said no more. Philippa kept her eyes upon the carpet, and was dumb. Grace drew a deep breath of relief, because the business, for which she had had no taste, was over. The silence, broken only by the sounds in the street without, was embarrassing.

"I have now performed my mission, ladies," said Mr. Allerton; "if I can be of service in explaining any detail, pray command me."

"The whole matter seems to me to require explanation," said Agnes, fiercely; and again Mr. Roscoe lifted his finger.

"Whatever may be thought of your father's distribution of his property—a subject which I must be excused from discussing," observed the lawyer—"the income which he places at the disposal of every one of you—in the case of those who are of age, at their absolute disposal—is enormous; unless certain conditions are complied with, it is, indeed, but a life interest, but it is a fortune in itself. I have no control over it, but I hope the wish he has here expressed, that you will come to me for guidance and counsel, will not be disregarded; at all events, my best advice will be always at your service."

"You are most kind," murmured Grace, gratefully.

"As far as you are concerned, however, you are in my power, young lady, for some years to come," observed the lawyer, smiling. "If you had been listening to me, as you ought to have done, you would have understood that I was your guardian."

"I am very glad that it is so," she returned, with an answering smile.

Upon Mr. Roscoe's face the lawyer noticed there was the reverse of a smile. Was it possible he had flattered himself that Josh would have put him *in loco parentis* to his little Fairy? When his own legacy of £5000 had been mentioned, Mr. Roscoe had inclined his head as if in acknowledgment of that benefaction, but he had exhibited no emotion. His gratitude, if it existed, had been perhaps swallowed up by the disappointment that the will had caused his friends. That he sympathized with them it was evident, though he

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had given no utterance to that emotion. His face was grave and dissatisfied, though not more so than if, moved by such a feeling, it might have been expected to be; but to Mr. Allerton, who did not for a moment credit him with anything of the kind, he seemed to be putting no little restraint upon himself, while at the same time he recommended patience and resignation to others.

As it seemed evident that no question was to be put to him, Mr. Allerton took his leave of the ladies, and was accompanied downstairs by Mr. Roscoe. As the lawyer reached the hall, "One word," said that gentleman, and led the way into his own room and closed the door.

"You have observed that it was not your intention, Mr. Allerton, to discuss with those ladies the document it has been your duty to read to them; but I hope that remark does not apply to others, who are in a better position, perhaps, to judge of the matter—myself, for instance?"

The speaker's tone was quiet, and his manner studiously respectful; but there was a tremor in his voice that belied them both.

"I am aware that I have no *locus standi*, in a legal sense," he went on, hurriedly; "but I have some influence with your clients, and they will naturally look to me for an explanation."

"Mr. Tremenhere's will explains itself, Mr. Roscoe," replied the other, coldly. "You can scarcely expect a man in my position to give you his opinion on its merits."

"Certainly not; there can, however, be only one opinion on the matter. You heard what Miss Agnes said: she called it an infamy!"

"I was very sorry to hear such an observation from her lips."

"So was I. I endeavored, as perhaps you observed, to restrain her; but you must admit that there was great provocation. The whole thing is preposterous. Such a will cannot hold water for a moment."

Mr. Allerton smiled mechanically; no lawyer could have helped it. The idea of a thing not being defensible in law because it was "preposterous"—and not "for a moment," too—tickled him in spite of himself.

"I am not speaking on my own account, remember, Mr. Allerton," the other continued, with a sort of earnest indifference difficult to fathom; "the affair is nothing to me. So far as I am concerned, as you justly hinted the other day, Mr. Tremenhere has 'remembered me,' as the phrase goes, very handsomely; but there are two ladies

in whom I naturally feel some interest, and who will expect me to manifest it, placed in a most unfortunate position. They are both of a marriageable age."

Mr. Allerton inclined his head. What was said of the elder sisters was certainly quite true—they had emerged from childhood. Miss Agnes, in particular, was by no means a chicken.

"I wonder," thought Mr. Allerton, "which of them this man has elected to marry? He would marry both of them—or at least their fortunes—if he could. At heart—if he had a heart—he is a Mormon. Of that I am convinced."

"Well, these restraints upon their affections, whether they have set them on any particular object or not, must be most galling. I do not wish to speak upon the religious matter, because Mr. Tremenhere was your client. But his daughters, I am quite sure, do not sympathize with the idea their father professed to have in view at all. They are Jewesses only in name—that is the simple fact."

"The majority of us are, unfortunately, Christians only in name," put in Mr. Allerton, dryly.

"No; the cases are not parallel. We wish, at least, to be thought Christians: these ladies do not wish to be thought Jewesses. I am speaking to you confidentially, of course, but I am speaking the truth. Under such circumstances, it is clear, these restraints must be set aside. You are concerned for the welfare of your clients, I am assured. Can there not be a friendly suit?"

"How can that be, when there are others who have a contingent interest in the matter—Mr. Vernon and his heirs?"

"The man is dead and has none—that is my belief."

"That would simplify matters, of course; but Mr. Tremenhere certainly did not believe him to be dead three weeks ago."

"Even so, there could be a compromise. The parties could all be brought into court together."

"A very difficult operation indeed, believe me."

"Still not an impossible one; since you have drawn the will you must appear to stand by it, of course; but you are a man of honor and good feeling, and you must see its injustice. Do you mean to tell me if Miss Grace, for instance, should marry without regard to these limitations, that you would not do your best for her?"

"That is scarcely a fair question," answered the lawyer, gravely, almost sternly. He could hardly prevent the disfavor with which he regarded his interlocutor from appearing in his voice. He did not like to hear him speak of Grace, and especially in connection

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with such a subject. It seemed a sacrilege. Was this man only putting a supposititious case to him, he wondered, or was he hinting at some scheme of his own?

"I would certainly do all I could to secure the happiness of Miss Grace," continued Mr. Allerton, "but that would be very little. It would be for the Court of Chancery to act in such a matter. They would have the will before them, and also the eligibility of the husband she had chosen. If you ask my private opinion, the latter consideration would, I think, weigh with a judge almost as much as the former."

It was not an answer shot at a venture; the speaker had aimed it with a particular object, and he saw that it had gone home. On Mr. Roscoe's impassive countenance there stole a cloud, not of disappointment, for he had probably expected some such reply, but of something very like despair; it was not merely the corroboration of a fear, but the look of a suitor who hears a final judgment given against him. It struck Mr. Allerton very much, for he saw no sufficient reason for it. Here was a man full of audacity and resource apparently overwhelmed by the mere expression of his private opinion; or, if it was even the statement of a fact, one that must surely have already occurred to him if he had thought upon the subject, and who could doubt that he had?

"No doubt you are right," said Mr. Roscoe, after a long pause. "Thank you. I will tell the ladies how the matter stands." And so they parted.

Mr. Allerton felt that he had discharged an unpleasant duty in a manner even less satisfactory than he had expected. Had his news been received with even more antagonism he would have preferred it, if only those he had had to deal with had shown a little more of their hand. The difficulty of the situation lay at present in its obscurity; the only thing he felt sure of was that in Mr. Roscoe he would find the key to it. But Mr. Roscoe himself was an enigma to him.

"My impression is," said the lawyer to himself, with a grim smile, as he walked homeward, "that that man will annoy Lord Morella more than he has ever done yet, by decreasing our scanty successes in the conversion of the Jews; he will embrace the Hebrew persuasion himself, which will count for two on a division."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE KEY OF IT.

As days rolled on, Mr. Allerton was surprised, and perhaps as a lawyer a little disappointed, that Mr. Roscoe, or rather those over whom that gentleman had evidently so great a sway, gave him no trouble. That remark of his that the will would not hold water showed that he was conscious of its weakness, and any advice that he might have taken on the subject would probably have corroborated his opinion. If opposition was intended, there seemed no necessity for delay; but at present there was no sign of opposition. Mr. Allerton had seen the ladies more than once, and they had fallen in with all his arrangements as regarded business matters; no allusion to the will had been made at all. Miss Agnes had taken matters almost entirely on her own shoulders. "Whatever suits my sister will suit me," Philippa had meekly said; but she had not looked meek. It struck the lawyer that they were not on good terms with one another, but had buried the hatchet while he was with them, as in the presence of a common enemy. And yet they did not treat him as an enemy. Agnes even sought his advice, and put various business-like and pertinent questions to him, the source of which he was at no loss to discover. The two sisters were obviously acting under instructions. As to Grace, matters were very different. In the disposition of the vast income which Mr. Allerton held in trust for her, she at first not only took no interest, but the whole subject appeared to be distasteful to her.

"Do not let us talk of money," she exclaimed, pleadingly.

"But it is necessary," he remonstrated; then added, gayly, "You will come to take the same interest in it—or in the spending of it at least—I do assure you, as in shopping."

But there was no answering smile.

"To me, dear Mr. Allerton, money has been a curse."

"What! already?"

"Yes, it has altered everybody about me for the worse; so changed them, indeed, that they are scarcely recognizable. Agnes

talks and, alas! I believe, thinks of nothing else. Poor papa is forgotten."

"My dear child, you must not think that," said the lawyer, caressingly, "you are too sensitive. Moreover, you must remember that your sisters were not to him what you were, nor he to them. *You* only were 'his little Fairy.'"

"I know, I know," she sobbed; "he loved me so; but he loved Agnes too, and Philippa. And to hear them speak of him as they do!"

"Surely not to you?" put in the lawyer, indignantly.

"No, not to me—I am spared that—but to one another."

"Perhaps there is some evil counsellor who sets them against him, who persuades—"

"No," she interrupted, quickly; "to do Mr. Roscoe justice, that is not so. He restrains, and even reproves them. They are not so bitter as they were, I think, thanks to him."

"That is so far well. You are right to do him justice, as we should do to all. You must remember, Grace, that not only did your father make a favorite of you, which was not judicious—though I cannot blame him, for I have fallen into the same error—but that the conditions under which he has bequeathed his property affect them to their disadvantage, which (at present, at all events) is not your case. You must not be hard on them because they seem hard on him. I have seen so much of this. 'The evil which men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones.'"

"No, no," she cried; "his good is here," and she touched her bosom.

"Yes; his memory is kept green in your faithful little heart," he answered, approvingly. "Still, as I have said, we must be just. Your sisters have some cause for complaint—that is the fact. That feeling, however, will wear off. Things will settle down. You are going to the river-side, I hear, for a few days, and afterwards to Cumberland. That will be good for all of you, but it will prevent my seeing you perhaps for a long time to come. It is my duty to inform you how you are situated as regards your affairs. I hold in trust for you a very large income; but my hands are free. You will not want a tenth of it. The rest will accumulate—save what you wish to spend on any object dear to you. You have some cause at heart, perhaps, to benefit; some good purpose to serve."

"To do some good! That would be a pleasure indeed!" she exclaimed. "I have never done any good. I know of no good cause. Pray help me."

It was pitiful to hear her. Here was a girl generous, tender-hearted, full of good impulses, no doubt, with the means to indulge them to the full, but who had never done so, from sheer ignorance and lack of opportunity. The charities had never been cultivated at Lebanon Lodge. She was like some moral Laura Bridgeman, with all the wish in the world to improve herself, but the soil had run barren because untilled. For the moment the lawyer was lost in the religious philanthropist; he saw in this girl, with her generous nature and vast income, an instrument ready to his hand for good. The vision vanished, however, like a breath. Duty with him, though it was by no means divorced from sentiment, was always in subjection to it; he had something of the zealot about him, but not his greed. Grace might do good with her income, for there was enough and to spare of it; but what he had in his mind was to save far the greater portion of it, so that when she came of age she should be in possession of a fortune which, however small compared with what should have been her share of her father's wealth, should make her independent of the conditions he had attached to its inheritance, and free to marry whom she chose. It was to the lawyer's credit that he was well aware in this case she could never have the husband he had in his mind for her. A few thousand pounds would be a mere drop in the ocean towards restoring the family fortunes of Lord Cheribert.

"I will do what I can," said Mr. Allerton, smiling, "to put you in the way of finding out for yourself that what you rail against is not an unmixed evil. Money is dross, it is said; but even dross—the very scum and refuse of things—may be turned to excellent use, just as out of the most offensive substances are extracted the sweetest scents."

Grace shook her head; her face expressed disbelief and even pain; it was evident that her mind was dwelling on some distressful reminiscence.

"Your father himself was fond of money," said the lawyer, gently.

"True; but for the good it enabled him to do with it," she exclaimed, with eagerness. "I thank you for reminding me of that. He never spoke of his good deeds even to me; but I remember once, when I was talking to him of his many friends, and how much he was sought after by persons of a rank far above our own, he said that it was his money which gave him the power to help them. 'Every one can help the poor,' he said, 'my little Fairy; but these fine folks who are poor too, though in a different way, cannot be so

easily assisted. I am the only man in the world, perhaps, that can keep their heads above water.'"

"That was true," assented the lawyer, with a smile that for her had nothing of sarcasm.

"Of course it was true. Dear papa was the soul of truth. 'I hope my little Fairy,' he used to say, 'will never, never tell a falsehood.'"

The lawyer nodded again. What she had said was likely enough; Josh used to aver, with a wiser man than he, though not so rich, that lying "was a strain upon the memory."

"And yet it is against a man like him—their own father—that Agnes and Philippa, just because he has left his money otherwise than they would have wished it— Don't let us talk of it; don't let us think of it, Mr. Allerton!" and she hid the face that was blushing for the shame of others.

"Still, as I have said, Grace, there is some excuse for them; they have wrongs which, though you share them, you do not understand at present."

"And I trust I never shall," she sobbed, indignantly.

"I trust so, too," he answered, earnestly. "Believe me, time will heal their disappointment, as it will your grief. Things will settle down. Your sisters' roof, remember, is your natural home. They are surely not unkind to you?"

He asked the question in some trepidation. It would be a great responsibility, as well as an immense inconvenience, to have this girl thrown on his own hands—to be compelled to find a home for her, and a protectress.

"No, no," she answered, much to his relief; "they mean to be kind enough; and if they only knew how wretched they made me by what they say to one another—"

"That shall be stopped," put in the lawyer, confidently. "There shall be no more of it; and when they cease to talk of their wrongs —which are not altogether fanciful, remember—they will cease to think of them; that is woman's way."

Girl as she was, Grace could have put him right on that point; but she only inclined her head; the subject was distasteful to her.

"Is Mr. Roscoe in the house just now?" inquired the lawyer.

"I suppose so," answered the girl, indifferently. It was that gentleman's custom, not only, like Hamlet's father, "of an afternoon," but in the morning, and also in the evening, to be at Lebanon Lodge; and she saw nothing strange in the frequency of his visits.

"Just so," said the lawyer, dryly; "your sisters have many matters to arrange with him, no doubt."

"Agnes has, of course; she naturally takes the lead, and he is her right hand, as it were."

"And Miss Philippa?"

"Philippa does not concern herself with affairs."

"But she feels what you were telling me about this supposed injustice of your father's will as keenly?"

"Oh yes; I think even more," sighed Grace, "if that were possible."

"Well, well, that will soon be over, I promise you. In the mean time, as you seem a little lonely—"

"By my own choice," put in the girl.

"I understand that. I shall send you a little friend to keep you company—a ward of mine."

"Oh no, no strangers; at least not yet," pleaded the girl, pitifully.

"It's only a dog, my dear," he answered, smiling. "I have been left its trustee and executor under an old lady's will; and I am sure I shall find no kinder mistress for it than yourself. It is a well-conducted dog, though it answers to the name of Rip. And now good-bye. I want to have a word or two with Mr. Roscoe about business matters, and will look in upon him as I go out."

The lawyer found Mr. Roscoe in his room, looking to the full as much at home there as he had done in his patron's time. He received his visitor stiffly, but courteously enough; his attitude seemed to be one of armed neutrality, ready for either peace or war.

"You have been interviewing Miss Grace, I suppose?" he said, with a quiet smile.

"Yes. I find it rather hard to impress upon her the sense of her own position."

"She is utterly ignorant of business."

"That was, of course, to be looked for; but she exhibits a want of interest in her own affairs which is unusual even in a young lady. You will agree with me that, under the circumstances, there is some danger in that, as it will prevent her from understanding the motives of others, who may not be so disinterested."

"Quite so," returned Mr. Roscoe, blandly, "and also their feelings. The latter consideration is of some consequence just now, and I am glad to have the opportunity of speaking to you upon the subject. It would, in my opinion, be better, for the present at least, that Miss Grace should be separated from her elder sisters."

Mr. Allerton stared in amazement; not only did the proposition itself seem to him monstrous and unnatural, but it was also the last thing he expected the other to suggest. He knew that Roscoe must desire above all things to retain his influence over the whole family; and why he should propose that the youngest of them, and presumably the most plastic, should be withdrawn from his control was inexplicable to him. He had the worst opinion of the man; he regarded him as a respectable solicitor regards a distinctly shady one, and Mr. Roscoe had not even the excuse of belonging to the law.

"You surely cannot be serious," he replied. "It would be a very grave step to take a girl of Miss Grace's age from her natural protectors and her own home. What on earth could justify such a course?"

"Circumstances," returned Mr. Roscoe, coolly. "Very peculiar circumstances, I admit, but they exist in her case. She does not get on well with her sisters. They are irritated—naturally irritated, as I venture to think—by the provisions of their father's will; and, like most women, they are unable to control their tongues. She resents their observations on him exceedingly, and they resent her defence of him. Some day or another, I am afraid, they will reveal to her his real character, of which she is in a state of blissful ignorance; then she will have a very rude awakening from her Fool's Paradise. That is a misfortune which, for her own sake, should if possible be avoided."

Mr. Allerton thought so too; the contemplation of such a catastrophe, which he felt was only too likely to happen, alarmed him. It was impossible to surmise the effect of such a shock upon a delicate nature, already suffering from the keenest grief. On the other hand, he was convinced that it was no solicitude on Grace's account that impelled this man to make the proposition. What could be his motive? He could not fathom it, but his very failure to do so convinced him that it was a deep one.

"Such a revelation as you speak of, whether founded on fact or not," returned the lawyer, "would, indeed, be deplorable. I cannot conceive a more wicked and cruel act; nor, if it is really to be apprehended, how it is possible to be avoided. Grace has no other home to go to."

Mr. Roscoe shrugged his shoulders and faintly smiled.

"We who are bachelors, Mr. Allerton, have much to learn as to the ways of women. It so happens, however, that I have had particular

opportunities for studying the characters of the two ladies in question, and under feelings of strong irritation—I am speaking to you in confidence, of course—they are, in my judgment, capable of anything. As to avoiding such a contingency, it appears to me," he continued, in the same quiet tone, but flavored with the least touch of sarcasm, "in view of this weighty consideration, and also of the trust and confidence that the late Mr. Tremenhere evidently reposed in you as regarded this young lady, that you are the proper person to provide a home for her."

"That is out of the question," answered the lawyer, firmly. "If circumstances compelled her removal from her sisters' roof it would involve nothing less than a public scandal, since I should certainly seek for her the protection of the Court of Chancery. I could not have such a responsibility on my own shoulders upon any account. There would be some advantages in such a course, no doubt. She would be secure from adventurers; whereas, as at present situated, she must be more or less exposed to offers of marriage — an acceptance of any of which would, as you are well aware, be fatal to her material interests, though beneficial to those of her sisters. I'll think about it; but, on the whole, I am strongly of opinion that this danger is less serious than the moral and physical one involved in removing her from her own home and belongings and transplanting her elsewhere."

"That consideration, I confess, has never occurred to me," said Mr. Roscoe, biting his lips, "nor did I imagine that you would be so unwilling to take personal charge of the young lady. Well, I can only say, then, for the present, that I will do my best here to smooth matters."

"Grace is already indebted to you, she informs me," said Mr. Allerton, graciously, "for your good offices in that respect."

"She is very good to say so," returned Mr. Roscoe, but his face, as the other took his leave, bore anything but a look of satisfaction. Mr. Allerton felt that his difficulty had been surmounted, but without knowing how that object had been achieved; he had checkmated his adversary, he was convinced, but by some move he did not himself understand.

"The scoundrel was as much frightened at the notion of my applying to Chancery about the girl," said the lawyer to himself as he went his way, "as I was at the idea of taking charge of her. What scheme can he be devising? He did not like that prospect of a 'public scandal,' I noticed. Of course he wants her to marry. Did

he think that was more likely to happen if she left her home than if she remained, I wonder? My argument to the contrary seemed to move him. But there must be something else beyond all that. It seems contrary to reason that he should wish to get rid of her; yet he certainly did wish it till I threatened him with the Court. It cannot be that he feels himself equal to driving a pair but not the three, for he has pluck and perhaps skill enough to drive a dozen; why, therefore, should he wish one of these three women away?"

On this problem the old lawyer worked, with his hands behind him, like a boy before the Euclid-board, on his road through the park. Before he came in sight of "The Corner" he exclaimed, with triumph, "I've got it! Roscoe must have done, or be intending to do, something he is very much ashamed of, and afraid of being found out. The more eyes that are watching him under the same roof the greater is his danger of discovery; and he wanted to get rid of at least a pair of them. Yes, I feel sure *that* must be it."

And the lawyer nodded to himself, and pulled up his ample and old-fashioned shirt-collar, as was his habit when he had succeeded in any obscure calculation; he thought he had hit the right nail on the head.

CHAPTER XVII.

ELM PLACE.

It is only of late years that the beauties of the Thames have come to be appreciated even by Londoners; I can myself remember the time when that lovely reach between Maidenhead and Cookham was almost unvisited except by local admirers, and when an Eton eight-oar, rare as a whale that strays up from the sea to some river-mouth, used to create quite an excitement.

The Sunday flotilla, to which illiberal shepherds give the grosser name of Pandemonium, was utterly unknown, and no one who lived on the banks and had a lawn stretching down to the river dreamed that it could one day be his Pactolus. Even to the Americans, who are so quick to discover anything that is worth seeing in England, the Thames was at that time only associated with Windsor. Now all that is changed, and he who visits England for the sake of the picturesque, and does not float down—the best way is on barges—from Oxford to Richmond, has missed his aim. What is quite

peculiar to the Thames, and a very great convenience to people of taste who have also plenty of cash at their bankers', is that there is scarcely a house on it that cannot be got during the summer months for money. The vicar lets his modest house and garden for that period for a rent that far surpasses his annual stipend; the landed gentleman in these bad times lets his riparian mansion at a price that compensates him for the humiliation; the widow parts temporarily with her modest cottage, and with the proceeds of the transaction makes that tour on the Continent she has so long promised her daughters, but which, had not her house been on the Thames, her poverty must have denied to them. For from twenty-five to fifty guineas a week the wealthy cit for three months of the year can now secure a paradise, which, at the conclusion of his term, he gives up with a sigh to its proprietor, who takes it with a sigh, for he knows that his orange has been squeezed, and floods and frogs will be his portion for the winter. While it lasts, however, there is no heaven on earth to be compared with the Thames heaven.

In the case of the Tremenhere family, with their immense income, it was merely a question of which river palace to choose; it is my belief that they could have had any one of them, excepting Windsor Castle, which has never yet been advertised, nor even, so far as I know, been disposed of for the summer months by private contract. It was late in the year, and the house agents shook their heads, but nodded them cheerfully when the Tremenhere purse was shaking before their eyes. If money was really no object, no doubt the matter could be arranged for the ladies, even if some tenant had to be bribed to give up his bargain.

Mr. Roscoe, of course, conducted the negotiations; he felt himself like a Monte Cristo, though only by deputy, and immensely enjoyed the experience. This gentleman, like his deceased partner, believed with all his heart and soul in money; the possession of it afforded him an exquisite pleasure, dashed only by the reflection that there was not more of it. There, however, the similarity ended. In Josh's character the desire of acquisition never overmastered prudence; Gain with him had been a good dog, but Holdfast was a better.

Edward Roscoe never touched a card nor made a bet, and had a very wholesome contempt for those who dissipated their fortunes in such follies; but he was a born gambler. The Stock Exchange for him supplied the place of the roulette-table and the race-course; and his ventures, compared with his means, were very large. Of this his employer had by some means become aware, and, as we know,

had taxed him with it. It was a reason which, even if he had believed him to be an honest man, would have always prevented him from leaving his subaltern in any position of trust as regarded his own fortune; and the knowledge of this fact made Mr. Roscoe as bitter against him as the conditions of the will itself.

When he had selected such summer palaces as he thought most suitable—the family wanted one for only six weeks or so, which, of course, greatly added to its cost—he prepared to take the ladies down to make their choice. The expedition promised to be a somewhat exhausting one, and Agnes volunteered to take this trouble off her sisters' hands. Grace was well content that it should be so; but Philippa objected to the arrangement, and showed an unwonted decision in opposing it. The conflict of opinion between them was sharper than the occasion seemed to warrant. Philippa even lost her temper, and "said things." One of them was that Agnes was not yet old enough to go roving about the country alone with a male friend. This remark, though complimentary to a certain limited extent, was not taken in good part. Some very bitter words passed between the two sisters.

"Mr. Roscoe shall decide for us," at last exclaimed Agnes.

"What! Do you mean to say that you still wish to accompany him alone, notwithstanding what I have said about its impropriety?" inquired Philippa. "How shameless!"

"I shall do what Mr. Roscoe thinks right," answered Agnes, with white face, and lips that quivered with suppressed passion.

It would have been a pretty quarrel in one sense, though anything but pretty in another, had not the bone of contention, Mr. Roscoe himself, happened to come in—which, of course, prevented the subject being pursued on exactly the same lines. They could hardly discuss the delicate question of "propriety" in his presence; but each expressed her views with warmth. Between Goneril and Regan this Edmond had a difficult role to play, but he played it to perfection. However angry they were with one another, he so contrived it that the arrows of their wrath were never aimed in his direction. Now, as they each looked at him as to their own counsel for his advocacy in their favor, it seemed impossible but that he should make one or other of them his enemy. Yet it was not so; the office he undertook at once was that of judge. He had favoring eyes for both, though to the close observer there was a difference in the favor. His kindliest words were directed to Agnes, his most conciliatory looks were given to Philippa.

"The question is of small importance, my dear ladies, as it seems to me," he cheerfully observed, "and there is no need to make a fuss about it. I thought myself, Philippa, as your sister had the management of all domestic matters, that she would be the proper person to make choice of your new home; and I confess I do not understand, Agnes, why you, who are always so kind as well as sensible, should have any objection to Philippa's accompanying us; but, on the other hand, the doing so would leave Grace at home alone, which it would hardly be a nice thing to do. Under the circumstances, I must ask you both to leave the matter in my hands. The houses I have selected have all their good points, so that no great mistake can be made in any case, and I will go down by myself and choose the best of them."

His tone was gentle but firm; it had a sort of paternal authority in it, from which it seemed there was no appeal, for nothing more was said on the subject. There was a look of patient endurance in his face, which each of the ladies flattered herself had been produced by her antagonist.

"How tiresome the dear fellow must find Philippa!" thought one to herself. "In what false positions Agnes is always trying to place him!" thought the other.

The next week they all went down to the river. The family circle had an addition in the person of a little black-and-white fox-terrier, Mr. Allerton's promised present to Grace. He was not beautiful (from a dog-fancier's point of view), but accomplished; that is to say, full of tricks. He tore to pieces everything that he did not swallow, with frantic enjoyment; and with evident taste preferred a lady's lap to the basket and cushion that had been provided for him. Whoever was sitting down had to accommodate him; but, once installed, he was not troublesome so long as he was allowed to absorb some article of her attire; if he had a preference it was for Brussels lace, of which Philippa, who was now always meditative and self-involved, missed some yards on his first day. Notwithstanding this, he soon became a great favorite with the sisters, but especially with his mistress. He was affectionate, and full of caresses for them all; but he had his dislikes, and one of them was for Mr. Roscoe. Sometimes he would get into a sort of hysterical frenzy at his presence, and bark at him as if he would bark his heart out; but he generally contented himself with a pitiful whine that seemed to say, "How can you, *can* you, ladies, allow this person to hang about your drawing-room, when you know how I hate him!" It is probable the

antagonism was reciprocated, but Mr. Roscoe had his feelings more under control.

Elm Place was somewhat higher up the river than its most beautiful reach (for some reason or other, Cliefden had not been procurable); but it was a very fine house, and commanded an excellent view. It had a beautiful lawn sloping down to the stream, and an old walled garden at the back, in which Queen Anne had walked, and on certain occasions (though always at night) was even said to "walk" now. Behind rose great woods, with paths cunningly contrived, so that here and there the noble landscape, with the windings of the tranquil river, was made to form a picture set in a leafy frame. This was Grace's favorite retreat; while her sisters lounged upon the lawn and feasted their eyes upon the ceaseless procession of boats and pleasure-barges, she would, with Rip—"the off-and-on companion of her walk"—climb the full-foliaged hill, and gaze her fill upon less busy scenes, mellowed by distance. She had plenty to think of, and more to dream about. Thanks to Mr. Allerton, she was secretly doing a great deal of good, though, as it were, by leverage; sometimes she wished that she could do it with her own hands. For the first time, the riddle of the painful earth presented itself to her for reflection; the unequal distribution of wealth, and her own undeserved freedom from the cares and pains of poverty, disturbed her unsophisticated mind. No doubt she was in error, since her father had not been troubled by it; but then he had had larger views, and found the opportunities for benevolence on a great scale. Her sisters no longer pained her by any reference to him; but their very silence on the subject distressed her. However his wealth had benefited others while in his hands, it seemed to give little pleasure to those who had inherited it; she felt that it was somehow the cause of that estrangement between Agnes and Philippa which daily grew more marked. She knew not how to make peace between them; she only vaguely understood that they were jealous of one another; and any interference on her part, being so much the younger, she felt, would be resented. It was a relief to her when her reflections were broken in upon by some piteous and smothered howls from her little companion, whom half a dozen times a day she had to pull out by his tail from a rabbit-hole, into which the excitement of the chase had carried him farther than he had intended. It might have been written with justice upon Rip's grave that "He never, never caught a rabbit," but he tried to catch one many times. The "motive," however, upon which the

divines very properly lay such stress, let us hope, was sufficiently punished on each occasion by his being so nearly buried alive.

One morning Mr. Roscoe, who was lodging at Milton, a village nearly opposite Elm Place, much frequented by boating-men, brought over with him a visitor, Lord Cheribert. The two elder sisters were, as usual, on the lawn, and gave him an eager welcome. He was not unknown to them, as we are aware, but they had probably never expected to see him again. They were much better informed than Grace of the nature of the relations that had existed between their father and the aristocracy, and were very pleased to be thus taken notice of. They had seen scarcely any one since their bereavement, and even an ordinary morning caller would have been treated with rapture—a lord was, of course, a godsend.

The young fellow addressed a few words of sympathy to them, in suitable tones, but soon observed, much to his relief, that their woe had been already relegated to what the mourning establishments call "the mitigated grief department," and it did not seem to him surprising. It was impossible, he thought, in his artless way, that anybody should really be in the doldrums who had come into such a "pot of money." Josh's will had not yet been published, but the fact of his finding them where they were was proof that his "little leavings" (as his lordship spoke of them, just as his nautical friends called London "the village") had taken a natural direction.

"We did not know you were a boating-man, Lord Cheribert," said Agnes, graciously, with a glance at his aquatic costume.

"Nor am I," he replied, with a slight blush (by no means caused, however, by this reference to his airy garb); "I am much better at steering than pulling; but the fact is, I had some business with Mr. Roscoe" (he would never call him "Roscoe," which annoyed that gentleman excessively), "and, finding him down at Milton, I could not resist the temptation of looking in upon you. I hope Miss Grace is well."

He had been looking round for her with some impatience, which both the sisters set down to its true cause, yet, strangely enough, without the least feeling of jealousy. It might have been thought by some that this angelic state of affairs resulted from the peculiar conditions of their father's will, which made it to their advantage that Grace should find a wooer; but, to do them justice, it was not so. They did not covet Lord Cheribert except as a very eligible acquaintance, and they thought it only natural that the youth and beauty of their sister should have made an impression on him. They

had no desire to be enriched at her expense, which would, after all, be only an increase to their incomes, concerning which they had nothing to complain of. Yet if Lord Cheribert's visit had any serious intention as regarded Grace, it would make little difference to her, since they knew he was heir to a vast estate, whether she had her money or not; while to have a brother-in-law who would one day be a peer of the realm was an idea little short of rapturous.

"As to Grace," said Agnes, smiling, "you will probably have the opportunity of judging of the state of her health, Lord Cheribert, with your own eyes, for here comes her avant-courier. Where is your mistress, Rip?"

Rip was tearing down from the house to them, as usual, at full speed; he whirled round the ladies like a dancing dervish, snatched at the hem of Mr. Roscoe's trousers with an angry bark, and then leaped into Lord Cheribert's lap as he sat in the garden-chair, and ensconced himself on his soft flannels as though he had taken a lease of them for the summer months.

"What a dear dog!" exclaimed his lordship, in acknowledgment of this friendly conduct.

"You may well say that," said Philippa; "we calculate that he has cost us about fifty pounds already in breakages and depredations, and we have had him only a month."

"Can he swim?" inquired Lord Cheribert, without thinking of what he was saying; for his thoughts, like his eyes, were fixed on a figure that now made its appearance at the open drawing-room window.

"I am sorry to say he can," said Mr. Roscoe, gloomily. "He is not charming, to my mind, but he bears a charmed life."

"How can you talk so cruelly?" said Philippa, reproachfully, and Agnes made a blow at the hard-hearted speaker with her parasol which would have scarcely injured a gnat.

"I am torn by contending emotions, Miss Grace!" exclaimed the young lord, smiling. "I want to rise to do you honor, but I am afraid of disturbing your little favorite."

"Pray keep your seat, Lord Cheribert."

Her tone was gracious as she held out her hand to him, but very grave. She was thinking of the last and only time she had seen him, when he had been introduced to her by her father. She wore, of course, the same deep mourning as her sisters, but, as it seemed to the visitor, with a difference. It is not the trappings and the suits of woe that make us sad to look upon, but the heart that mourns

within us; yet to his eye the girl appeared more beautiful in her sorrow than she had in her joy upon her birthday fête.

"I should not have called so soon," he murmured, apologetically, "but that I found myself so near your house."

"We are glad to see you. I had heard of your kind inquiries about us from Mr. Allerton—they touched me very much," she added, softly, and with a break in her voice.

"I should have been very ungrateful if I had forgotten—" Here he stopped; he had been about to say, "what I owed to your father," but he suddenly recollected that the phrase was open to a double meaning. It was not possible that what one owed to him could be forgotten, since Josh had taken great care to have it put down in black and white. The young man's unfinished sentence, however, was undesignedly perfect, and she thanked him for it with her eyes.

"We must think it a great compliment that Lord Cheribert looked in upon us," explained Agnes, "since he is not a devotee to aquatics, he tells us, though he wears the garb of one."

"I am glad to be doing so, since Miss Grace's little dog seems so partial to flannels," said the young fellow.

It was rather an indirect method of pleasing Rip's mistress; but Agnes was too satisfied with the motive to question the speech. To find a lord so civil to them was in itself a joy. The speaker himself, on the other hand, was uneasily conscious of having said something ridiculous, and, as is usual in such cases, blundered on.

"At least, if it isn't the flannels, I can't think how I have so soon ingratiated myself into his affections. Perhaps our characters are sympathetic. What is the little doggie's name?"

"Rip!" exclaimed Mr. Roscoe, with unmistakable significance.

Lord Cheribert laughed aloud, but the color rushed into his face. The two elder ladies kept their eyes riveted on the ground in silence; but Grace, unconscious of the unfortunate coincidence, came to the rescue.

"Rip is a very affectionate, well-meaning dog," she said, "notwithstanding his bad name and naughty ways."

The young lord, who was not without a sense of humor, removed his cap in acknowledgment of the unintended compliment, and the rest of the party relieved their feelings by a ripple of laughter.

"I really don't see—" began Grace, blushing to her forehead.

"Then I beg nobody to open your eyes," interrupted the young man, fervently. "Your sisters and Mr. Roscoe are bent upon black-

ening my character, Miss Grace; it is as pure as the snow—after it has fallen a day or two;" and he joined heartily in the mirth of the others.

There is nothing that puts people on such easy terms with one another as a joke at the expense of one of them, good-humoredly enjoyed, and Lord Cheribert, who was very easily put at his ease, found himself quite at home.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONFIDENCES.

Although Lord Cheribert was not a boating-man, he was well acquainted with river life; he had a natural tendency towards sport of every description, and, to say the truth, cared for little else. It is often said of this and that clever young fellow who shoots or rides, or even plays whist or billiards to admiration, that the talents he exhibits in these pursuits would, properly directed, lead him to fame or fortune; but the fact is, some men are born with a marvellous capacity for sports and games, and for nothing else. That pupil of Plato's whom the philosopher would have

> "Formed for virtue's nobler view
> By precept and example too,"

but who *would* persist in astonishing the crowd at the Corinthian games by his skill as a whip (which must have been considerable), was one of this class. Though he could make the wheels of his four-in-hand

> "Along the indented plain the self-same track to mark again,"

it is probable he could never have pursued even a single course of philosophic lectures. The thing was not in him; he was born for a life of pleasure. A contemptible existence enough, it may be said; but, on the other hand, it is to be noted that your born sportsman (in the English, not the American sense) is not always an idle man, and does not necessarily turn out the total wreck and failure that a man of pleasure who is not a sportsman is almost sure to become. He may be dissipated, but he need not be debauched; he may be reckless, but he is rarely callous; he may easily enough, under

adverse circumstances, be a scamp, but there is generally something wholesome about him which preserves him from being a scoundrel. Lord Cheribert was a man of this kind; but, though he had no aptitude for the serious business of life, he had gifts which would have made him a social success—would have insured him, that is, a personal popularity in any branch of it. Being a lord, and the heir to a great estate, his gracious manners and handsome face, his humor and frankness, would have made him a *persona grata* with society could he have been induced to mingle with it, but society bored him. Compared with the ordinary devotees of the turf, who had been his chosen companions, he seemed like an angel, though undoubtedly a fallen one; with them he was like the one-eyed man among the blind. But to those who knew nothing about his antecedents—and even to some who did—he was, superficially, very attractive. He had the art of making himself agreeable without exertion in a high degree. With women he was an immense favorite, and he was no more capable of behaving dishonorably to them than he was of theft.

Though, as we have said, not aquatic, he was conversant with boating matters, and in one half-hour put his audience so much *au courant* with everything in connection with them, that the changing scenes of river life constantly presented to their eyes were invested with thrice the attraction they had hitherto possessed for them.

"I know Elm Place quite well," he said; "Villiers had it, you know" (here he turned to Mr. Roscoe), "who came to grief over Camperdown at Doncaster."

Mr. Roscoe nodded; he could have given other causes for Mr. Villiers having come to grief, had he so chosen.

"Indeed," continued the young fellow, "I have lunched before" (for they were now partaking of that meal) "in this very room," and he looked round him with an air of reminiscence.

It was a large apartment, with four French windows, all now open, so that except for the comfort with which the meal was served it might have been a picnic. "To my mind it is the pleasantest house upon the river, though that roar of the Milton Weir has always a melancholy sound to my ears."

"I rather like it," said Agnes; "it reminds me of the London traffic, which, when one is away from town, one somehow always misses."

"And you, Miss Grace?" inquired Lord Cheribert.

"Yes, I like it too. There is something soothing, if a little sullen, in that eternity of sound."

"I used to like it once myself," said the young man, gravely; "but for me it has now a tragic association."

"Really? Oh, do tell us!" exclaimed Philippa. "I do so love tragedy."

This was not true, for incidents of a tragic nature "upset" her. It will be remembered how dreadfully "cut up," as Mr. Roscoe had expressed it, she had been on the occasion of her father's death, though she had since come to regard her loss with a little too much philosophy. She was more emotional than Agnes, and certainly more easily frightened. When she said she loved a tragedy, she only meant that she was curious to know what had happened at the weir. The river forked at Milton Weir, where a few posts marked out the course of its main current; the side stream rushed through these posts at speed, and then with increased velocity dashed over the weir in foam and thunder.

"Well, it is rather a sad story to tell people at lunch," said Lord Cheribert, unwillingly; "but I suppose such things are constantly happening on the river; there is scarcely an eddy which has not had its victim, or a bathing-place where somebody has not been drowned; only I saw this with my own eyes, you see, which makes a difference. We were sitting at this very table—a whole lot of us—when an argument arose about boating. Some said you could 'shoot' Milton Weir, and others that you could not, and then the speed and force of the by-stream, that leads to the lock, were discussed, and whether a good swimmer could hold his own in it. Young Picton, of the Guards, said he was sure it could be done, and offered to back himself to pass the posts, and swim round the one which stands with a ring through it, about thirty yards farther down, in the very centre of the stream, and back again. It seemed rather a foolhardy thing to try, but he said he had been in worse places in the river (though it would be difficult to find them), and I took odds that he would do it. I regret that bet to this day."

"Still, as you were backing him," observed Mr. Roscoe, "it could not have influenced him in any way to undertake the matter."

"I am not sure," said the young lord, gloomily. "If there had been no backers there would have been no layers, and I put a pony on it. A lot of us went off to the place at once in a couple of punts; young Picton was in my boat, in the highest spirits. He was not twenty, and as fine a young fellow as there was in the

regiment. When he had stripped, and just before he took his header, he called out, 'Get your money ready; I shall be back under the ten minutes.' But he never came back to us alive."

"How horrible!" exclaimed Grace, with a shudder.

"Why, yes, as it turned out," assented Lord Cheribert, in a gentle and contrite tone; "but nothing was farther from our thoughts than his being drowned. He might not get round the middle post, which he had backed himself to do, but we thought he would at least be drawn down by the current to the weir, where there is a landing-stage. But that by-stream is full of undercurrents, as we were afterwards told, and the poor boy, though he got round the post, was whirled round and round before our eyes, and presently pulled under as though a rope had been tied to his legs. When the place was dragged for him, it was found choked with water-weeds, and he among them. And that is why I don't like the sound of the Milton Weir."

The ladies looked greatly horrified, and there was an unpleasant silence at the conclusion of the young lord's narrative. Mr. Roscoe broke it by observing, dryly, "But you won your bet?"

"I won it, but I did not take it," replied Lord Cheribert. "As the other man was obliged, of course, to pay, I sent the hundred pounds—for he had bet me four to one—to the Royal Humane Society. I was more sentimental at that time than since you have known me, Mr. Roscoe," he added, sharply.

"It was quite the right thing to do," said that gentleman, with undisturbed serenity.

"If you think so, that, of course, settles the question."

The young man was rather ashamed of the weakness he had exhibited, and resented exceedingly the other's cynical comment. His irritation was so far of advantage that the spectacle of it turned the thoughts of the ladies from the tragic episode he had been describing, and Agnes, with some tact, began to praise the Royal Humane Society—and then, gradually extricating herself from the subject, proposed a walk in the grounds.

She was a clever woman, though her sympathies were restricted within narrow limits. Her natural horror at the incident just described had already quitted her, as water slips from a duck's back; though it was not so with Philippa, and much less with Grace, whose face still wore an expression of distress and pain. Lord Cheribert was quite angry with himself, as Agnes saw, for having evoked it."

"Do you know the view from the hill at the back of the house?" she asked him. "Grace has made some sketches of it; show them to Lord Cheribert, my dear."

The sketches were sent for and duly admired.

"They are charming," said the young man; "would it be rude to ask if they are truthful?"

"You are putting the artist on the horns of a dilemma," put in Agnes, smiling; "she must either confess to failure or run the risk of being thought conceited."

"You are quite right," said the young man, humbly. "I am always making a fool of myself. Let us go up the hill by all means."

Then it so happened that Agnes and Philippa had some alteration to make in their toilets, while Grace had none; so Lord Cheribert and herself started a little in advance of them, Mr. Roscoe, of course, delaying for the two elder ladies, on one or other of whom he was in constant attendance.

"I hope I have not shocked you too much with my sad tale, Miss Grace," said the young lord, in a tone of tender apology, as they walked up the hill.

"I was shocked, I confess, Lord Cheribert."

"I do not wonder at it; I was wrong to tell the story. It is a terrible thing for a fine young fellow to be cut off like that."

"For a bet," observed Grace, with severity.

"Yes, and, as you say, for a bet. I used to bet a good deal, as I dare say you have heard."

"I have heard something about it."

"Well, I don't do it now; at least I don't mean to do it after next month."

"Why next month?"

"Because that is when my race comes off, you know—or rather you don't know. It is very much after time. I have promised my father that it shall be my last professional performance on the pig—I mean in the saddle."

"Do you mean that you are a professional jockey?"

"Well, no; not quite that," he answered, smiling; "there are gentlemen riders, of course. You seem to be quite ignorant of those things; most of the ladies I know—but, to be sure, I don't know many—are devoted to racing."

"And to bets?"

"Yes, and to bets. Of course some of them only bet gloves—these always want a point or two, I notice, beyond the odds; but

some of them make regular books, and are quite as keen about the money as we are."

"I don't think I should like those ladies."

"I dare say not; I am not wildly fond of them myself. I prefer quiet girls, who have good feelings and—and—what a dear doggie that is of yours! Rip, Rip!" and the little creature barked and danced around the young lord, just as he would have had him to do, and so preserved him from a very considerable embarrassment. Grace had by no means fallen in love with him, as perhaps he flattered himself, and was not embarrassed in the least. If she had understood his meaning, as he now felt, she might not only have been embarrassed but even angry; he had been going much too quick and too far, but Rip had saved him. Dogs have great sagacity; in Hampshire they are trained for truffle-hunting; why should they not be also trained for "gooseberry picking"—to accompany young people in the early days of their "walking" together, and to make diversions just at the right moment?

"Since you disapprove of those who are keen, as you express it, about winning money from their friends, Lord Cheribert," said Grace, after a pause, "why do you like to do it yourself?"

"I was only speaking of the matter as regards ladies, Miss Grace. With a man, of course, it is different. What is a fellow to do—I mean a fellow in my position—if he does not speculate a little? I don't understand investments, as your poor father did, so I try the turf, not with such satisfactory results, I am sorry to say." He was defending himself by this reference to Mr. Tremenhere, but he little knew the effectiveness of his weapon. She took a milder view of the young man's proceedings at once, though he had not her father's excellent motives.

"Yes, I suppose the desire of gain is natural to a man," she said, "like his delight in hunting. I can't understand the attraction in either case, so I suppose I am no judge of it. You don't want the money, and you don't want the fox."

"Oh, but there you are quite mistaken, Miss Grace," he put in, earnestly. "As to the fox, I have not a word to say; he has a disagreeable smell, which the money never has—even the old Romans knew that—*non olet*, they said—and I want it exceedingly. Considering what people are pleased to call my 'position,' I am the greatest pauper in all England."

"You don't look like it," answered Grace, smiling. His frankness and the smile that so well suited it were having their effect upon her.

"Well, these flannels are not costly, though my tailor will have to wait for his money for them. But it is the very fact of one's having to keep up a certain appearance that prevents one from retrenching: at least that is what the governor says in explanation of what Mr. Roscoe would call a tightness in the money market. I am ashamed of myself for speaking of such matters to you, Miss Grace; but if any one should ever tell you that I am exceedingly hard up, I am sorry to say—whatever might be their motive for saying it—that they would only be saying the truth."

She looked at him in some surprise, for his tone seemed unnecessarily earnest.

"I don't suppose any one is likely to say anything of the kind to me, Lord Cheribert."

"Very likely not," he laughed, uneasily; "but if they do, you know, you might just tell them that you had been made aware of the fact by the person principally interested. Now, I dare say you are saying to yourself what an egotistic creature this man is to bore me with his private affairs, in which I cannot see one ray of interest."

"Nay, Lord Cheribert, that is not so," she answered, gently; "but, no doubt through my own stupidity, I am utterly unable to understand the immense importance which people who have enough to live upon attach to more money."

"Indeed!" He looked surprised in his turn. "Well, the fact is, I am not in a position to enlighten you upon that point," replied the young fellow, laughing, "for I have never *had* enough to live upon. I have been in debt ever since I was at school."

"That means that you have always lived beyond your income, and, I am afraid, been very extravagant," she answered, reprovingly.

"People do say that," he admitted, gravely, "but then they will say anything. Selwyn says—but perhaps you don't know Selwyn—that if you spend every shilling on yourself it is quite extraordinary how far your money can be made to go; but I protest I never found it so."

"And have you spent every shilling on yourself, Lord Cheribert?"

"Directly or indirectly, every sixpence."

"Then you must forgive me for saying that I think it shameful. Some of us err in that way through ignorance of what is going on in the world, but that cannot be your case. Pray Heaven for a human heart, my lord."

As she stood regarding him, face to face, with a flush of indigna-

tion on her cheek, and the fire of scorn in her eyes, he stared at her in amazement.

"My heart is human enough, Miss Grace," he answered, humbly, "and I don't think it is hard."

"Pardon me; I had no right to speak so, Lord Cheribert."

"Nay, pardon *me;* you have a right, if you will permit me to say that much. But I don't think I am quite so worthless as I seem." She would have spoken, but he stopped her with a gesture. "Pray, listen to me one moment in my own defence. There are those who will tell you that I have had great advantages, and therefore ought to be a better man. I ought, Heaven knows, but not on that account. I have had *dis*advantages of every kind. Spoiled from my cradle, fawned upon even in boyhood, which it is most falsely told us is the age of naturalness, flattered as I grew up, to the top of my bent, I have never heard the truth about myself till now from a single voice, save one, and that a harsh one—my own father's."

"Had you no mother?" inquired Grace, softly.

"She died before I knew her."

"So did mine," murmured the girl.

"But you, at least, had a father who loved you dearly. That was not my case. I do not know when it was that he began to look coldly upon me, but it was too early. I was one to be led, I think —I could never stand being driven—but there was no one to lead me; and now, perhaps, it is too late."

Grace trembled, but not, as the young man perhaps imagined, from any notion of taking him in hand; she trembled at her audacity in having taken it upon herself to lecture him. She felt like a timid school-mistress who has "tackled" too big a boy.

"I understand," she said, "you have been reconciled to your father."

"Yes, that is so, in a sort of way. He means to be kind now, I think—after next month."

"Next month?"

"Yes, after my last race is ridden. His paternal heart will not begin to yearn for me till I have left the turf. Mr. Allerton will tell you all about it, if you are so good as to ask him."

The young girl blushed on her own account for the first time. She recognized at once that there could be only one reason for her making inquiry of Mr. Allerton about Lord Cheribert's prospects of amendment, and, above all, for his asking her to do so. The young

man perceived her embarrassment, and immediately endeavored to relieve it.

"Perhaps some day or other, Miss Grace," he continued, smiling, "I shall be a pattern son and a reformed character, and you will say 'Good boy' instead of scolding me."

"I never meant to scold you; I had no right—"

"You said that before," he put in, quickly; "I hope you will not repeat it. It is the only thing you have said to me that was not kind. Rip, Rip! good doggie! so they are coming up, are they? How quick his ears are for the feet of a friend! Here are your sisters and Mr. Roscoe."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE WEIR.

Of all pleasure-vessels, there is none so much run down—though it has the reputation of doing that to others—as the river steam-launch. It is too big for its place; it is ugly; its voice is strident and ear-piercing; and it causes waves to rise in its wake that are a great nuisance to rowing-boats. All this is very true; but, for comfort and convenience to its passengers, give me (or even lend me) a steam-launch in preference to any other boat that cleaves the stream. There are no perspiring rowers to watch, which of itself is a relief to any one gifted with human pity; you can move about without upsetting the ship, or shipping a sea, or unshipping the rudder, or doing anything nautically objectionable; you have not got to look out (metaphorically speaking) for squalls; another has to look out for *you*—and squalls; you can take your lunch like a civilized being, and a much better one than ever came out of a row-boat; you are not concerned about the difference between up-stream and down-stream; you "need no aid of sail or oar, and heed no spite of wind or tide"; and when it rains you can get under cover.

Of course there was a steam-launch attached to Elm Place, as well as a flotilla of skiffs and punts; its name was the *Comet*, but when the Tremenheres used it, it was more commonly termed the *Compassion*, because of its gentle ways. Grace would never go on board of it save under a solemn promise that it should not spurt unless the course was clear; that it should "slow" whenever there was a boat within fifty yards of it, and that it should never be allowed to

scream. When it wanted the lock gates open a horn was blown, *vice* the steam-whistle superseded. This made it a floating heaven for everybody as well as the angel herself. Sometimes the *Compassion* would tow a boat or two up-stream, when the joy and gratitude of the tired oarsmen were delightful to see, and proved what they really thought of rowing.

Lord Cheribert, in spite of his flannels, was never unwilling to forego the delights of boating, and accept an invitation from the ladies to go up or down the river in the *Comet*. He generally had a bet or two with Mr. Roscoe—just a sovereign or so, unless that gentleman thought it a particularly "good thing," when he would "make it a fiver"—about how many boats there would be in a lock, or how many swans they would meet in a mile—for he could no more help betting than he could help breathing: it was not, however, that time was heavy on his hands, for he enjoyed these little trips amazingly, and had an idea that he was getting domestic. His company was greatly appreciated by Mr. Roscoe, because he won money of him; by the two elder sisters, because he was a lord (they would have liked to have had painted on him—as the boat had the *Comet* on her stern—"This is a lord"); and by Grace, because she really liked him. His manners were unexceptionable; his talk was bright and genial; and she believed that he had a good heart. Perhaps he had; it ought at all events to be in good condition, for it had suffered nothing from use. It had experienced a few impulses —some creditable to him, but some the reverse—that was all. Grace likened him, with the poet, to the lily.

Lord Cheribert, though no profligate, was not, it must be confessed, much like that emblem of purity in other respects. He once told an old friend of hers with whom he was acquainted, in an unwonted moment of confidence, that Grace Tremenhere "did him good"; and in a vague sort of way, I think, she shared this notion. There is nothing so pleasing to a girl's nature as the belief that she is reforming a rake—though, as a general rule, she might as well stroke a hedgehog with the object of making that animal smooth. Grace did not flatter herself to this extent; but it did not escape her observation that in her presence the young fellow was always at his best; that he toned himself down, as it were—"slowed" like the *Comet*—and strove to make his conversation agreeable to her. She sighed over him while she smiled at him. Her sisters often interchanged significant glances in connection with these young people, and even whispered to one another:

"I really think this will come to something."

Mr. Roscoe nodded agreement, and, with less circumlocution, observed, "He's hooked"—an expression more forcible than appropriate, since it suggested that the young lady had been fishing for him, which was very far indeed from being the case.

A great deal of river life was seen from the deck of the *Comet*, and a very picturesque and pleasant spectacle it was. Grace grew quite learned about it, thanks to Lord Cheribert's teaching, who enjoyed his tutorship amazingly, and could not understand what the poor devils had to complain about who found coaching so irksome; he would have taught her anything he knew with the same alacrity, though the terms of payment were less distinctly understood than he could have wished.

Their neighbors at Milton in the aquatic line particularly interested the ladies; it is a village as completely given up to boating-men in the summer months as Switzerland is to tourists. Every day fifty fine young fellows, in every description of river craft, from the punt to the canoe, set forth from it up stream or down, and many of their sunburnt faces grew quite familiar to them. The two London eight-oars were their favorite boats, the crews of which were probably even more familiar with them, though neither party had interchanged a word. Whether in acknowledgment of the courtesy exercised by the *Compassion* in "slowing," or from the natural chivalry of their disposition, these young gentlemen would often get up a race for the amusement of its owners, and in return the launch would sometimes tow them home. When this happened, the ladies had an opportunity of observing their unknown friends with considerable particularity. At first the *Monarch* used to beat the *Prudent*, but after a while the result of the struggle was the other way, in consequence, as Lord Cheribert said, of a change in the latter's crew. The new stroke was a stranger to him, but he had heard something about him, and indeed it was natural to those who saw Walter Sinclair for the first time to inquire who he was. He was not only a tall, powerful young fellow, exceptionally good-looking—fair except as to face and hands, which the sun had tanned to a tawny hue, and with nut-brown hair that seemed to curl more and more as he warmed to his work—but he had an air of great distinction. Though evidently a gentleman, he had not the aristocratic appearance of Lord Cheribert; but his expression, which is unusual among boating-men, was curiously thoughtful. When he was pulling he pulled with a will—or, as Mr. Roscoe expressed it, "like ten

thousand devils"—but when in repose he seemed to lose himself. He seldom joined in the subdued talk and laughter of the rest of the crew at their ease; his gray eyes seemed to be looking into space for something beyond the horizon, yet they took in everything about him—he was the best "lookout" in the boat—and sometimes (though he was much too well-bred to stare) they took in the *Comet*, every stick of her, like a flash of lightning. He interested the ladies considerably, who named him Werter from his supposed disposition to melancholy; but whether he was so or not, he was certainly the cause of melancholy to the *Monarch*. Lord Cheribert affirmed that he was as good a swimmer as he was an oarsman, and that he could give any of his companions ten yards in a hundred in a foot-race. *They* called him *the Cherokee*, because he had been among the American Indians, and had acquired some of their accomplishments.

One afternoon the *Comet* made rather a longer voyage than usual, down to Windsor; it was a day Grace long remembered. Never had the river looked so bright and joyous. She could scarcely tell whether the warmth of the sunshine in the open, or the checkered shadow of the woods, or the coolness of the locks, as the launch sank with the sinking of the waters, was most delightful. The Castle, seen from the bosom of Father Thames—the noblest spectacle that man's hand has ever given to man's eye—the woods of Clieveden, not yet touched with autumn's fiery finger; the peaceful villages on either side the stream, had never seemed to her so beautiful. Lord Cheribert sat near her quietly smoking the contents of his cigar-case, which was of the size of a small portmanteau; if he could not always sympathize with her thoughts, he knew when she did not want them disturbed, and found satisfaction enough in looking at her as she sat with Rip on her lap, and her dreamy eyes half closed. There are eyes which, though beautiful in themselves, look better so, as Solomon (who had a great experience) well understood: they take us with their lids. Presently the dog leaped down and began to bark; a swan was hissing at some one in a canoe. It was ungrateful of the bird, for the man had been feeding her with biscuits, and when his store was finished, and he moved lightly away with a silvery splash of his oar, she resented it. It was Werter, as they called him, returning home, and close to Milton lock. Its gates received his canoe, as well as the launch, into its icy bosom, which slowly rose with both of them. There are few places where we get so good a view of our fellow-creatures as when we are in the

same lock with them; it is almost as good as being in the same boat.

"What a magnificent fellow that Sinclair is!" observed Lord Cheribert, softly; "it is a pity that Oxford could not have him in their boat at Putney."

"He is not a University man, then?" inquired Grace.

"Oh no; he has had a rough time of it in his life, I believe, out in the Wild West."

"He does not look rough."

"No, indeed. He is gentle and good-natured enough, they tell me."

Here the young fellow put his hand upon the launch to steady his frail craft, and Rip, having sniffed at it as if it were something nice to eat, proceeded to lick his fingers.

"It is a good sign when your little dog takes to a man, Miss Grace, is it not?" whispered Lord Cheribert.

"I don't think Mr. Roscoe would agree with that sentiment," answered the girl, smiling. "But nevertheless, generally speaking, I think it is so."

"I'm glad to hear you say that, because, you know, he took to *me*." And he looked up in Grace's face and smiled his sunniest smile.

The lock gates opened slowly, making their wooden frame, as usual, for the river picture, and out came steam-launch and canoe together, side by side. Then a sad mischance happened. It was at Milton lock, it will be remembered, where the by-stream ran down to the river at mill-race speed. The great posts just marked the road for the river craft, and on the other side of them the current seethed and boiled, as if mad to join in the headlong leap of the water.

Just as Sinclair pushed off, the dog, unwilling, as it seemed, to lose his new friend, overbalanced himself and fell into the water. Grace saw it and sprang up with a scream of horror, and every one started up aghast to see what had happened. Poor Rip, though swimming his best against his fate, was violently carried by the stream between the posts; and the next moment there was a great splash in the water, and the canoe turned bottom upward; Sinclair had jumped out of it after the dog. It was a generous impulse, but to one who knew the river seemed little short of the act of a madman.

"The weeds! the weeds!" exclaimed Lord Cheribert, at the top of his voice. "There are weeds under the left bank!"

If the swimmer heard he did not heed, for to the left bank the dog was being hurried, and after him he made. It was a most exciting, but, to those who had heard Lord Cheribert's story of that very place, a very distressing spectacle. The young fellow swam like a fish; in half a dozen powerful strokes he had overtaken the little half-drowned creature, and, reversing the usual practice in such cases of emergency, the man had seized the dog's neck with his teeth, and held him up above the waves. As with his strange burden the young fellow turned about, with shining face, a shout of applause burst from all beholders. The next moment it died away, and was succeeded by a shudder of fear. Instead of swimming towards the weir, where there was a landing-stage, as all expected, he made for the post and ring that stood in the centre of the by-stream; and after a stroke or two, though he still moved his powerful arms, they perceived that he was not only making no progress, but sinking lower in the water. The weeds, the presence of which had cut him off from the weir, had got him by the leg. It was a terrible moment. Agnes and Philippa hid their faces; Grace, white as death, with parted lips and staring eyes, looked on in speechless agony. Lord Cheribert kicked off his shoes.

"No, my lord," whispered Roscoe, seizing his arm and holding it as in a vice, "you shall *not;* it would be certain death to you, and he is as good as dead already."

But Sinclair was not dead. With a last almost superhuman effort he suddenly freed himself from the weeds, and, still with the dog in his mouth, reached the post, and seized the ring. Then the men cheered and the women wept.

"There's not another man in England who could have done it," exclaimed Lord Cheribert, admiringly, "or who would not have let go of the dog."

The next moment the young fellow was sitting on the post with the dog in his arms. He took off his cap, which had somehow stuck to him throughout, and tossed it in the air. Every man burst out laughing, not so much at the absurdity of the spectacle as a relief to their feelings; in the laughter of the two elder ladies there was, however, much more of hysterics than mirth, and Grace did not laugh at all. She was greatly distressed and pained, but she took out her pocket-handkerchief, and waved it in reply to the young man's salutation. The thunder of the weir made any verbal communication with him from anybody out of the question.

Then the lock-keeper put out in a punt attached to the bank by

a long chain, and delivered the youth from his unpleasant situation, where he was sitting, however, quite at his ease. Rip, half drowned and a quarter frightened to death, was shivering in silence; he had not a bark left in him. The lock-keeper would have taken the dog, but Sinclair kept hold of it, and, walking quietly down to the river-side, where the launch awaited him, was about to hand the animal to Lord Cheribert, as though returning some little article which he had picked up, when Grace interfered and held out her trembling hands.

"I am afraid he is rather wet," said the young fellow, smiling. He was rather wet himself, but looked not a whit the worse for that.

"How very, very good and wrong of you!" she murmured, earnestly, as, hugging her little favorite with one hand, she held out the other to him with a tearful smile. She was what Philippa afterwards termed "very much upset."

Then Agnes, perceiving her sister's embarrassment, stepped forward and said: "You have done a very fine but, I am obliged to add, a very foolish thing, sir—to have saved our dog at the risk of your own life. I really don't know *what* to say to you."

"You can ask him to dinner," observed Lord Cheribert, sententiously.

"We shall be delighted to see you if you will come over to 'The Place'; we dine at seven," said Agnes, graciously.

"I am afraid I have no dinner *dress*," replied the young fellow, ruefully.

"That is not of the least consequence," observed the hostess.

"You must change *that*, at all events," remarked his lordship, pointing to his dripping garments, "or I shall dine in a mackintosh. Mr. Roscoe and I will call for you in half an hour."

CHAPTER XX.

WALTER SINCLAIR.

Some people would have called Lord Cheribert's conduct, in proposing that Walter Sinclair should be invited to Elm Place, little short of chivalrous. When a young man is seeking the affections of a young woman, and has not yet obtained them, he is not generally so willing that she should cultivate an acquaintance with a possible rival. But the fact is, that the idea of rivalship never

entered into Lord Cheribert's head. It is one of the advantages of being a lord that that position gives one a great sense of security. The young fellow was fully persuaded, though he had not yet succeeded in recommending himself to Grace as a suitor, that there was no one else who was preferred to him; and it never struck him for a moment that Mr. Walter Sinclair should be preferred. He himself had a liking for the man, admired his good looks, his prominence in all athletic exercises, the pluck he had exhibited—and perhaps still more the recklessness—in saving the life of the little dog at the risk of his own; but he never dreamed of him as a rival. There was no comparison between them. His own affairs, it is true, were in a very unprosperous condition. He had parted with half his patrimony in post-obits; but still his father was a rich man and a peer, and he would one day stand in his shoes. Without being conceited, he had considerable confidence—as indeed he had good reason to have—in his own personal attractions; and if he had not made the way with Grace that he had hoped to make, he flattered himself that he had made some way; she was certainly interested in him; her manner was always gracious to him, and sometimes confidential, even tender. He had too much the start of her new acquaintance to fear him, even if he should think of entering himself for the matrimonial stakes; but no such notion occurred to him. He had no more chance than has a half-bred horse of winning the Derby. Sinclair, as he believed, and justly, had neither wealth nor position. His father had been, it was said, an unsuccessful merchant, and afterwards an adventurer, who had not succeeded even in that line. Nay, Sinclair had been an adventurer himself (though not in a bad sense), and took no pains to conceal the fact. He talked quite frankly to his companions of the shifts—not dishonorable, but still very disagreeable shifts—he had been sometimes put to in the course of his wanderings; and though he had gathered more moss than the rolling stone is generally credited with, he had only just enough of it to make him comfortable. He had been living for some time in London without a profession, and had become accepted in boating circles, and that was about all that was known of him. There would have seemed no reason to Lord Cheribert, even had he thought about the matter—which he did not, for his character was singularly uncalculating—to object to the introduction of Mr. Walter Sinclair to Elm Place. There had been a time when the intrusion of a young gentleman with such antecedents into the family circle would have met with serious opposition from Mr. Roscoe, but it was not so now.

Even if he had entertained any apprehensions of one of the Misses Tremenhere falling in love with him, he would have regarded the matter with philosophy, if not with satisfaction, provided only—and this did not seem probable—that the young man was not of the Jewish faith. His keen eye had perceived that the suit of the young lord was not progressing with Miss Grace; perhaps the presence of a rival might quicken his attentions, or perhaps the other might prove more acceptable to the young lady. He had a liberal mind as to her disposal in matrimony, and, as the nearest friend of the family, would have "given her away" to anybody she fancied, or who fancied her, with a light (and lightened) heart.

What was also in Mr. Sinclair's favor, the two elder ladies—notwithstanding that it was their sister's dog he had saved, and that he had shown to her a somewhat marked preference after that proceeding—were not one whit jealous of him. Perhaps, with a modesty rather unusual even with their modest sex, they both thought him too young for them. They did not appear to expect any particular attentions at his hands, nor in the least to grudge those he paid to Grace.

It was natural enough, at first, at all events, that he should pay them to her. The service he had rendered to her, though indirect, was a personal one, and it of course evoked her thanks, and, what was more, her serious reproof. It was strange enough that to both these young men Grace should be placed, somehow, in the relation of a monitor, but so it was; and it put them, in consequence, on a certain familiar footing with her, which, had she been a flirt, she would have known how to use. The scolding of the young schoolmistress, though taken in good part, was not taken in the same way by her new friend as by her old one. She told him, as they were sitting on the lawn together after dinner, what had happened at Milton Weir before to Lord Cheribert's friend, and he drew a very serious face indeed.

"I had no idea of that," he said; "the spectacle of my absurd proceedings (swimming with a dog in one's mouth, like something particularly foolish in heraldry) must have distressed you, I fear, from association."

"It distressed me on your own account," she answered; "you might have been drowned, like the other poor young fellow."

"I don't suppose, in my case, it would have mattered very much to any one," was his quiet rejoinder.

Here was another young man apparently without a mother or

anybody else (except Grace) to take an interest in him; some girls would have thought themselves in great luck.

"How can you talk so wickedly, Mr. Sinclair?" she replied, indignantly.

"Wickedly? Well, of course I'm wicked enough," he answered, not with a drawl, but with that quaint hesitancy that belongs to many of the citizens of the Great Republic, and which he had probably picked up from them. "I didn't say it might not have made some difference to *me*, but only that it would not have mattered to any one else."

"It would have mattered to your friends, I suppose," she observed, coldly.

"Yes, true; I suppose our fellows would have had to put off the match at Marlow next week, unless they could get another stroke."

"You are a cynic, it seems, Mr. Sinclair."

"Am I?" he smiled, with evident satisfaction; "I am so glad to be something. I am always so puzzled when men say to me, 'What *are* you?—soldier, sailor, tinker, tailor, gentleman, apothecary, ploughboy, thief?' I have been almost all of them except the last, but just now I am nothing. In future, when that question is put to me, I shall know what to say—'My good sir, I am a cynic.'"

The serious earnestness of his tone was such that his speech had no suspicion of flippancy, and far less of impertinence. Grace smiled in spite of herself.

"I am afraid you are an idle man, sir."

"No, I don't admit that," he answered, gravely. "I've worked—well, I don't suppose any of my friends among the men yonder know what work is—but I may say harder than most. And though I am still a young man, I feel for the present I have had enough of work. I am enjoying myself just now—very much," he added, with pleasant significance.

It was very difficult not to laugh at, or rather with, this young gentleman; he possessed the soul of humor that is contagious.

"What I see now," he continued, as if in explanation of his happy condition, and looking round at the others, who were engaged in mirthful conversation, "is the first glimpse of home life that has been vouchsafed to me for many a year."

To his unaccustomed eye the comfort and quiet of the scene, as well as the demeanor of the actors, all seemingly at their ease, might well have given the impression of home; but to Grace, who by bitter and every-day experience knew how much of it was indeed

acting, it seemed piteous that this brave and attractive young fellow should have rated it so high; he must in truth, she thought, be without friends and belongings if the atmosphere of Elm Place had struck him as fragrant with the domestic virtues.

"I am glad that you are enjoying yourself," she answered, simply, "but as to nobody caring whether you were drowned or not, I must say, in justice to Lord Cheribert, for one, that when he saw you were caught by those dreadful weeds, it was only by main force that he was restrained from jumping into the river and sharing what seemed to be your certain fate."

"Was that so?" returned Sinclair, with a fine glow on his face. "He may be assured that I shall not forget it. Lords must be made of better metal than folk on the other side of the Atlantic are apt to imagine."

"This one, at all events, has a good deal of good about him, I think," said Grace, with a grave smile.

"Really?" observed the young fellow, glancing at the subject of the conversation with an interest not unmingled with surprise. "If you say so it doubtless must be so. And the other gentleman," he gravely added, "is he a good-fellow too?"

The question was indeed a strange one, and, as it happened, even more embarrassing than it appeared to be; yet the visitor had asked it with the same coolness as he might have used had he been inquiring the age of Rip, who, as though conscious of his late obligation, had ensconced himself—not a little to Lord Cheribert's mortification—on the lap of the new-comer.

"Mr. Roscoe is a very old friend of our family," replied Grace, evasively.

"Really?" answered Sinclair, and again the word—evidently a favorite with him—had an intonation which seemed to suggest surprise. "I am interested in him," he went on, more indifferently, "because I once knew a man of the same name in Chicago."

"Mr. Roscoe has a brother, I believe, in America. Do you see any resemblance in him to the gentleman you have in your mind?"

"None whatever; no, my man was very outspoken; 'No one's enemy but his own,' they said of him. Now, this one, I should say, was of quite another sort."

"It seems you are one of those gentlemen who pride themselves upon being a judge of character," observed Grace, smiling.

"Well, yes, that is so. I don't know much about books; I have

had little time, I am sorry to say, for reading; but about human nature—for a young one—I do claim to know a little. As soldier, sailor, tinker, tailor, gentleman, apothecary, and ploughboy I have seen a good deal of it."

"Then a friend of mine would say—and you seem to be in doubt about a profession—you ought to make a good lawyer."

"No, no; I particularly said that my callings did not include the whole of the proverbial list, but stopped at ploughboy."

"If you mean to imply that thief and lawyer are synonymous, Mr. Sinclair," put in Grace, with severity, "I must be excused from agreeing with you. The dearest friend I have now in the world, who is also the most honest of men, is a lawyer."

"Really?" repeated the young fellow, with ludicrous iteration. "Well, let every one speak as he finds. The lawyers have been a little hard on me, it must be confessed." The speaker frowned mechanically, as if at some remembrance of a wrong, and a harsh glitter came into his gray eyes, contrasting strangely with their usual softness.

"I should not have thought you were a person to bear malice," observed Grace, involuntarily.

"Well, no; I hope not on my own account," he answered, slowly; "when I said the lawyers had been hard on me, I should have said on mine. My father always laid his ruin at the door of one of them. It is easier to forgive things done against one's self than against one's father, is it not?"

"No doubt," assented Grace, with unconscious sympathy. "Is it long," she added, moved by the association of ideas, "since you lost your father, Mr. Sinclair?"

"Yes," he replied, in a grave, slow way; "I was but a boy when it happened. He was murdered by Indians."

"Oh, how shocking!" ejaculated Grace.

The sound of her voice a little raised attracted the attention of the others, who were sitting in garden-chairs only a few feet away, but still at a sufficient distance to prevent what the new-comer had said to her from becoming public property.

"What is the matter?" exclaimed Lord Cheribert. "Not snakes, I do hope."

There were snakes on the wooded hill which the imagination of his town-bred friends had gifted with the attributes of the cobra.

"No, not snakes," answered Sinclair, smiling (for the joke had a meaning for him, though of another kind). "To a Western man

it would have seemed nothing, but I am afraid I have alarmed Miss Grace with speaking of an incident of the frontier."

"It is most extraordinary," observed Philippa, "how the gentlemen who do us the honor of visiting Elm Place *will* regale us with horrible tales."

"Nevertheless, let us hear it," said Mr. Roscoe; "I will try not to be very frightened."

"No," said Sinclair, under his breath.

Perhaps it was only a mechanical utterance; but Grace, who noticed that the young fellow had turned pale, took it as an appeal for her to direct the conversation into another channel. It was only reasonable, she thought, since it was her ejaculation which had called attention to them. What had fallen from him quite naturally in private talk, and after due introduction, he might well object to make the subject of public comment.

"I really think we have had enough of distressing incidents for to-day," she said. Then, in a lighter tone, "Mr. Sinclair tells me that he knew a gentleman in America of your name, Mr. Roscoe. I wonder if it was your brother?"

Mr. Roscoe, who had been lounging in his basket-chair, very much at his ease, suddenly drew himself up. "Indeed!" he said, with an indifference that rather contrasted with that movement. "It is not very likely, for Richard has not mingled with his fellow-countrymen for years."

"I have not seen him for years," said Sinclair, quietly; "but certainly his name was Richard. A tall man, rather loosely made, and of the same complexion as yourself, and a little older."

"That seems to answer to what I remember of him," said Mr. Roscoe, after a moment's hesitation; "but he is younger than I."

"That is possible," returned the other, thoughtfully. "He was living a hard life—that, indeed, we all do out West," he added, hastily; "but his passion was hunting, which out there means shooting. I know of few men who could maintain themselves so well by their rifles when game was scarce."

"He must be your brother, Mr. Roscoe," exclaimed Lord Cheribert, laughing. "These sporting instincts run in a family."

"It is generally a misfortune for the family when they do so," observed Mr. Roscoe, significantly. He was generally impervious to sarcasm, but on this occasion Lord Cheribert's sally seemed to have hit on a tender place.

"It was a misfortune for me in this case," continued Sinclair, who

understood, of course, the satire of neither speaker; "for it was Richard Roscoe who persuaded my poor father to go to the plains, where he met with a miserable end—not that I blame your brother in the least, sir," he added, gently. "He was a very frank and fearless fellow, and, I am sure, a faithful friend."

A sigh of reminiscence (or perhaps of relief) here involuntarily broke from Mr. Roscoe.

"I hope you have heard no ill news of your brother?" said the young man, earnestly.

"No; not at all. He is in good health, and in the last letter I had from him expressed his intention of returning to England."

"Indeed! There is no man I wish more to see," said Sinclair, eagerly. "He would have sought me out himself, could he have done so, I feel sure, though the tidings he had to give me I know only too well, save in their details."

"How curious it all seems!" observed Philippa, breaking the somewhat embarrassing silence; "how strange that Mr. Sinclair should be a friend of Mr. Roscoe's brother! How small the world is!"

"Not the New World," returned the new-comer, gravely. "Here in England we are accustomed to associate wide separation with the ocean. In America it is not so; though on the same continent, those who wish to meet are often deterred from doing so by thousands of miles of land travel. Even that, of course, can be surmounted by those who have long purses; but that has, unfortunately, not been the case with my friends. No one knows what poverty is who has not been in a strange land, cut off from all who are near and dear to him by the want of a few hundred dollars."

Lord Cheribert and Grace involuntarily exchanged glances. "You know what I told you," his half-laughing look seemed to say, "of the great convenience of ready money." "You know what I told you," her grave eyes seemed to say, "of the selfishness of those who lavish great possessions upon their pleasures, when so many souls as well as bodies are in actual need."

CHAPTER XXI.

A DIFFICULT POSITION.

THERE was fine weather on the river that year, which makes all the difference—except to fishermen, who are indifferent to the rain, or even like it—to those who live by the river.

Elm Place was a very bower of delight so far as nature could make it so. Unfortunately, human nature occasionally stepped in and stained the radiance of the sky.

Agnes and Philippa, for some reason which Grace could not comprehend, were at daggers drawn, or at all events very loosely sheathed. They no longer agreed even in abusing their dead father; it was a topic not indeed exhausted, but, as it seemed, in abeyance. Mr. Roscoe was their only bond of union; his personal influence was always exerted in favor of peace, but he had the greatest difficulty in enforcing it. They each appealed to him against one another, but Philippa the most urgently. "Agnes's conduct, Edward," she would say to him, "is becoming intolerable; not an hour goes by in which she does not insult me by words or gesture."

"How can you be so foolish?" he would reply, contemptuously. "What does it really matter? You can surely afford to bear with her infirmities."

"You speak of them as if they were natural weaknesses, the infirmities of age."

"Well, perhaps they are," he answered, with a smile; and neither the words nor the smile displeased her. "You must be patient, Philippa; you are not the only person who has to suffer. To quarrel with your sister just now would be your ruin. You can always quarrel, and there are other matters which are more pressing. It is most important to get Grace off our hands before anything else is done."

"That is not so easy as you predicted. She likes Lord Cheribert, but not well enough to marry him. Her liking for him does not grow."

"Then let her take up with Sinclair."

"Take up, indeed! That shows the value you place on a woman's love," she exclaimed, bitterly.

"Nay, nay, you know better than that," he replied, softly. "The phrase was a coarse one, I admit; but seriously it seems to me that Grace *is* leaning towards this young fellow at an acuter angle, as it were, than she leaned to the other. So long as she falls into the arms of one of them, it is no matter which."

"How hard you are, Edward! I am sometimes tempted to think that everything is a matter of calculation with you; that love is worth nothing in your eyes."

"Not even a risk?" he put in, gravely.

"I don't say that," she continued, less vehemently. "But it seems it is not worth a loss."

"A loss? You speak as if the matter were one in my eyes in which love was in one scale and money in the other, and that the latter weighed down the former. You *know* that that is not the case, Philippa."

"I know that I am a very miserable woman," she answered, with a sob.

"How unreasonable you are!" he said, reprovingly; "it is not two months ago that, on a certain occasion, when your imprudence —nay, and mine too, I confess it—was, you remember, almost the cause of our undoing—"

"Don't speak of it," she broke in, in terrified accents. "Remember it? Can I ever forget it?"

"And yet, to hear you now, one would think you had forgotten it. I say that when that happened you solemnly promised me it should be the last of our risks; a lesson you would lay to heart, and never cease to remember; that henceforth my motto should be 'Patience,' and yours should be 'Trust.'"

"I do trust you," she answered, in a voice half choked by tears, "and in more ways than one, as you well know; but I did think that when—when our circumstances altered there would be no need for patience."

"So did I," was the quiet rejoinder. "Again you speak, Philippa, as if you were the only sufferer. I say I thought so too; and who would not have thought so?" His face was white with passion, and he clinched his hands as though in recollection of some grievous wrong. "We have been cruelly treated, you and I; but it cannot last forever. If our freedom does not come by one way, it will come by another. It is for that that I have been waiting;

though hitherto, it is true, the Fates have been against us. On Grace's marriage, remember, we should have much more to work with."

"More money! What do we want with money?" she inquired, passionately. "I hate the very name of money."

"Still it is a necessary evil," he answered, dryly. "You do not wish your sister Agnes to inherit the whole of your father's property, I suppose? You would not be obliged to her for the scraps she might throw to you out of her abundance. You would not like to be patronized by her as a poor relation."

"I should not, indeed," she answered, vehemently; the fire in her eyes, the flush on her cheek, the impatient beat of her foot upon the ground, showed how little she would like it.

"Then let Trust and Patience be our mottoes for a little longer. Everything comes to them who wait."

Thus, time after time, did Edward Roscoe stave off the question "How long is this to last?" from Philippa Tremenhere. It was a difficult task, but not so difficult as to answer the same inquiry from her elder sister.

Agnes was far bolder than Philippa, because her position, as she thought, was assured. She could hardly call Philippa a chit of a girl, but she regarded her absurd attachment for Mr. Roscoe much as if she were one. It was a mere foolish fancy, which one word of out-speaking on her own part would burst like the pricking of a bubble; but, unhappily, it was impossible to speak it.

"I am sick and tired, Edward, of Philippa's silly fluttering about you, like a moth about a candle," she would say, with angry impatience.

"And do you suppose *I* am not sick and tired of it too?" would be his bitter rejoinder. "You only suffer from it, remember, at second hand."

"That is all nonsense," she replied, sharply; "a man never dislikes seeing a woman make a fool of herself for his sake; but it drives the woman who loves him to distraction."

"I am ashamed to hear you say so, Agnes. You should have more self-restraint—I had almost said self-respect—if not for your sake for mine."

"It is for neither of our sakes, sir, that you use such arguments," she answered, hardly, "but merely for the desire of gain."

Agnes Tremenhere's temper was naturally what is termed "short," and for the moment she had lost it; otherwise she would hardly

have ventured to utter such a home truth to the only man on earth of whom she stood in fear. The effect of it recalled her to her senses, though what she thought its consequence was far less serious than it really was. Mr. Roscoe turned his back upon her; not, as she imagined, in high offence, but to conceal the expression of unquenchable hate which he knew, despite his powers of self-control, his face would reveal to her. If he could have killed her by a look, he would have looked at her. Nothing, save that it was a quotation from Shakespeare, could excuse the hiss that passed through his teeth, "Hell cat!" Fortunately it was uttered as "an aside," but the involuntary movement of the muscles of his back—the unmistakable index of extreme fear or rage—did not escape her attention.

"I did not mean that, Edward," she exclaimed, hurriedly; "I did not know what I was saying."

"I hope not," was the pained reply. He had turned round now, and was regarding her with reproachful amazement, such as some domestic pet, unconscious of wrong-doing, might exhibit when struck by its mistress.

"Heaven forbid that I should grudge you," she continued, tenderly, "whatever you may need in that way! But you set too great a store on it. What is wealth compared to happiness?"

"True, but why should it not be combined with happiness?" he replied, persuasively. "There are few men worthy of you, Agnes; there is no man, deserving to be called a man, who for the sake of such happiness as you speak of would be your ruin."

"It is not a question of ruin," she answered, doggedly. She had come to herself as quickly as he had come to what he wished her to believe was *himself*.

"It is a question, however, of whether you should recklessly give up a huge fortune to swell that which Philippa already possesses. We must have patience, Agnes."

"That is a text from which you are always preaching; you promised me that at a certain time there should be an end of that sermon; and the time is past, and still I find you preaching."

"Because the tree does not bring forth its expected fruit, that is no reason why we should curse the tree. I mean you to have what in common justice should be your own, but it cannot be done in a day. If I did what you wish you would not thank me for it, though you think you would. How would you endure to live on a few hundreds a year, while Philippa had her tens of thousands?"

"She would not be happy," she answered, gravely.

"Yes, that is the key of it all," he replied, contemptuously. "You wish me to sell your rightful inheritance for a mess of pottage—the satisfaction of contemplating the humiliation and disappointment of your sister. You may see that yet, but it must be from a standpoint above her and not below. I must be allowed to have a clearer view of this matter than you, Agnes; I am not blinded by prejudice."

"So it seems," she replied, bitterly.

"Thank you. I hope that is another of the things which you say without knowing what you say. It is idle to argue with you while you are in this state. Let us go in." They were walking on what was called "the camp shed"—the terrace paved with wood at the foot of the lawn, and overhanging the river. He made a movement as though he would go up to the house, but she clutched his arm.

"Stay—I am ready to listen to reason. What would you have me do?"

"Have patience. That is all that is left for us both for the present. Time is on our side, and fighting in our favor. Grace is falling in love with Walter Sinclair."

"It is very foolish of her; Lord Cheribert would be far the better match."

"No doubt; but women *are* foolish. However, so far as we are concerned, the one is as good as the other. She has the same contempt for riches that you have persuaded yourself you entertain; but in her case it is genuine. She will marry, and perhaps be happy on a little, while we reap the fruits of her moderation. That will be one obstacle removed from our path."

"And Philippa?"

"Well, of course that will be more difficult. If it were any one else I should propose a compromise."

"I don't understand you." She spoke with something more than gravity; with all her faults Agnes Tremenhere was an honest woman, and though she professed to be ignorant of his meaning, it was not so.

"Do you think that I propose to rob your sister?" he returned, sharply. The flush upon his cheek was genuine enough, but it was not caused by virtuous indignation, as she imagined; he was furious at her scruples, or rather at his having proposed to her a shameful course of action which it was now clear to him she would have nothing to do with; he had almost shown his hand to her in vain.

She was frightened at his vehemence, as he had intended her to

be; but she was still in doubt—as she well might be—as to the motive of the compromise, since it seemed it was not a proposal to obtain money under false pretences.

"What I was going to say was, that if circumstances had been different it would have been possible for you all three to have combined together to make the iniquitous provisions of your father's will null and void. There would have been no harm ir that, I suppose. Justice, if not law, would have been on our side in a plan, for instance, whereby you all three married, and yet, by mutual agreement, kept your own."

She nodded in acquiescence; then added, with a sigh, "But then there is Philippa."

"Just so; with her—as I was about to say when you interrupted me so very unnecessarily—no compromise is possible."

"It is most shameful that it should be so!" exclaimed Agnes, passionately.

"Still so it is. Heaven is my witness that I don't care two straws about her; but I own that I am afraid of her. A jealous woman, whether she has any right to be so or not, is a very dangerous enemy."

Who looked at Agnes Tremenhere at that moment could have no doubt of the fact. Her freckled face was livid, her lips white with jealous hate.

"Let the shameful creature do her worst!" she cried.

"By all means; but not to *us*," he answered, quietly. "She will find me a match for her, in one sense at all events. Listen to me. When Grace is married, it is probable that things will be even worse at home than they are; it is one of those cases where things must be worse before they are better. Philippa and you will have to part."

She looked up at him with a glow of joy. "I see; but not you and I, Edward?"

"Or, if we do, it will be only for a little time, and in order to be united forever. What we must do is to persuade Mrs. Linden to take her."

"She will never do that; you would have to get Philippa's consent to go to her. They hate one another."

"You leave that to me," he answered, confidently, taking her hand in his and tenderly stroking it.

"They will see us from the house," she murmured, apprehensively, but without withdrawing her hand. His touch was delightful to her; it had the soothing charm of the "pass" of the mesmerist;

and it was so very, very seldom that he allowed himself even so small a privilege.

"Let them," he answered, defiantly. Then, dropping her fingers with a sigh, he added, "No, you are right, Agnes; we cannot be too prudent. I have a plan in my head, but it must ripen. In the mean time encourage Sinclair, if you think he is the surest card to play. He is a fisherman; ask him to come up to Cumberland next month and try the Rill."

"But Lord Cheribert tells me he is coming."

"No matter; let them both come. Perhaps Philippa will take the rejected one," and he laughed softly.

But Agnes gave no answering smile; it was a subject that had no touch of humor for her, though she liked *his* laughing.

"We must keep her in good-humor as well as we can," he went on, cheerfully; "you must not mind my being civil to her. It will be all the worse for her in the end."

That was naturally a subject for congratulation, but Agnes Tremenhere's face did not display it; she did not like the prospect of those occasional civilities.

"When you talk to me, Edward," she said, piteously, "I always feel for the time persuaded; but when you are not talking to me—and, above all, when you are talking to *her*—I am a very miserable woman. I can't bear it much longer; I can't, indeed."

"*Much* longer it will not be necessary to bear it, Agnes," he answered, gravely; "once more I say to you, have patience. It is five o'clock; they are all coming down from the hill yonder. Go in and make the tea."

She left him, and he entered an arbor at the extremity of the camp shed and sat down. His face was pale, and the dew stood upon his forehead. He had had a very trying time with her, but that was not the reason of his emotion, or why he trembled in every limb. Nor was it the plan he had told her he was devising for ridding them of Philippa, for in truth he had had no plan; that was but a device for gaining time. It was only a thought that had crossed his mind during his late interview—at the moment when he had turned his back upon his companion—and which, now that he was left alone, came back to him; but it was a very terrible thought, born of hate and rage, and nourished by disappointment and despair; it shook his very soul within him.

He lit a cigar, but the gentle weed brought none of its wonted dreams and oblivious consolations; if it brought dreams at all, they

were nightmares, and made his own society so intolerable that after a whiff or two he flung the cigar into the river, and sought the society of his fellow-creatures in order to forget them. But he did not forget them even then; the dreadful thought which had moved him so was an unbidden guest at that five-o'clock tea.

CHAPTER XXII.

A HANDSOME OFFER.

When people have nothing serious to do love-making goes on apace, which is one of the reasons why idle folks are always getting into mischief. Lord Cheribert, as it will have been concluded, was already deeply smitten by Grace, and though Walter Sinclair had started so long behind him he had made up for lost time, and was soon as much in love as he. The difference of social position, which, though he did not acknowledge it to himself, made the young lord so easy in his mind as regarded his possible rival, did not afflict Walter one whit. In this respect his very deficiencies were to his advantage; he was naturally far from conceited, but the manner of his bringing up, and the unconventional life he had led, prevented his recognizing his inferiority.

In his view one man was as good as another until the other had shown himself the better man. In the part of the world where he had been living rank had not been much thought of, for the simple reason that it did not exist; and wealth, though more highly considered (for what it procured, not for itself), was transitory. A man made his pile in a few months, and often lost it again in the same number of hours. Lord Cheriberts, without the lord, he had often met with, who were ready to lay their bottom dollar, or their top one, upon any event, so that *that* side of the young nobleman's character was quite intelligible to him. He looked upon it with great charity, but also some contempt, and thought it a pity so good a fellow should have made such a fool of himself. For, as to other matters, he admired him, though he could scarcely say for what. It was the first time he had experienced, in a man, the charm of manner, and he was attracted by it none the less because it showed itself in a rival. In that respect he at once admitted the other's superiority, but in that alone.

In his relations with Grace, though he did not conceal from himself that he loved her, his position was entirely different; he was humility itself; and this also was more owing to his upbringing than to his nature, which was one of practical common-sense. In the wild West, and even in the West where it is not so wild, there is an admiration for the female more in proportion to her rarity than her deserts; the most commonplace girl is a heroine, and women of the earth earthy are reckoned goddesses. The mistake is highly creditable to a community in which tenderness and refinement are not the leading features, and, though in individual cases it is sometimes disastrous, has on the whole a civilizing effect. Moreover, what is very curious, though it makes rough men gentle in their relations with the other sex, it does not make them shy. The knowledge, perhaps, that they may be called upon at any moment to act as her protector —a term in the Old World which has, alas! changed its meaning— induces a certain familiarity, which has at the same time no tinge of disrespect. No one could accuse Walter Sinclair of shyness; he had a perfect self-possession that Mr. Roscoe mistook for "cheek," but, the ladies well understood, was nothing of the kind; he showed it when conversing with Grace, as with everybody else, but his respect for her was reverential. There was nothing to be found fault with in Lord Cheribert as to that (and considering what *his* upbringing had been, it was proof indeed of his honest nature), but the difference between them in this matter was very great. Where the young nobleman felt his unworthiness was in his fallen fortunes, or at deepest in the folly that had destroyed them; whereas Sinclair bowed before her as to a shrine of Purity, which he trembled to approach even with his shoes off. Women in England are slow to understand this position of affairs, nor is it of much consequence, since it so seldom takes place. The two young fellows became great friends, but we may be sure they never talked of these matters.

The Misses Tremenhere had almost come to an end of their tenantry at Elm Place when Mr. Allerton paid them a visit; it was natural enough that he should do so, since he would have no other opportunity, as they were not to return to town before going to Cumberland; but, as a matter of fact, this was only the secondary object of his coming. He wanted to see Lord Cheribert on business matters, and he was much pleased, and not at all surprised, to find him where he was. The gentlemen, of course, all lodged at Milton, but they boarded over the way. The lawyer smiled when he discovered how very much at home the young nobleman made himself

there, and was not at all alarmed at finding Sinclair doing the like. He took his lordship's view as regarded any danger to be apprehended from him as a possible rival in Grace's affections, only more so.

To a family solicitor, above all other people in the world, the claims of birth and wealth (for the two must be combined; it is no use your being descended from Hengist if you have but £300 a year) seem overwhelming, even in courtship. The ladies who are his clients, however young and innocent they may be of the world's ways, have generally an instinct for eligibility. They may fall in love, and even at first sight, like Mary Jane and Jemima Anne, but not without having some previous knowledge of the position and property of their enslaver. The majority of these possible heroes are out of the question before they can make their first observation about Ascot or Mr. Irving.

A certain atmosphere, not necessarily of property but of appropriateness, surrounds the person of such heiresses as divinity is said to hedge a king. Cases have been known, of course, where the merest adventurers have broken through it and carried off their prize, but the incident is rare; moreover, though the character of Walter Sinclair was by no means easy for a man like Mr. Allerton to read, it was clear to him that he was no adventurer, at all events in the ordinary sense. He had no swagger, no pretence of any kind; he was not particularly polite; he looked you straight in the face when he spoke to you, and when he spoke of his belongings he was anything but boastful. His father, to judge by his own account of him, had been far from prosperous; beyond that point in his genealogy, either from charity or want of knowledge, he forbore to speak; and it was the lawyer's experience that your adventurer can never avoid references to his grandfather. Moreover, Sinclair referred to his own past as having been neither successful nor satisfactory, which in a young gentleman, who had at five-and-twenty years of age apparently made enough money to live upon for the rest of his days, was certainly a proof of modesty.

Still Mr. Allerton gave more attention to the young fellow than he would have done had he met him only in male society, and what he saw of him he liked, with one exception. He did not like the respect he showed to Mr. Edward Roscoe. The lawyer, of course, was prejudiced against that gentleman; but even allowing for that, it was certainly strange that an honest young fellow such as Sinclair appeared to be, and also of great independence of character, should take to him at all. At first, indeed, this circumstance awoke grave

suspicions in Mr. Allerton. He knew that Roscoe wanted Grace to marry; and if she could be married to some creature of his own instead of Lord Cheribert, who was now altogether removed from his influence, it would obviously be to his advantage; moreover, he thought he detected a willingness on the part of Roscoe to play into Sinclair's hands. If there was really any agreement, tacit or otherwise, between the two men, it would be a very serious matter. This unworthy suspicion, it is only due to the lawyer's honest heart, as well as to his sagacity, to say, did not last long; and though the problem why Sinclair was so civil to Roscoe still puzzled him, it ceased to have much importance.

Lord Cheribert's affairs were, at all events, much more pressing. It is a drawback to a man of financial genius like the late Mr. Joseph Tremenhere, or, at all events, a drawback to his clients, that his excessive skill in the management of affairs, and the self-confidence born of it, causes him to take every thread in his own hands, and trust little or nothing to others. This works well enough while he is alive, to hold the threads, and therefore answers his purpose with sufficient completeness; but, when he dies, his multifarious operations often present a tangled web to those who come after him.

The knots by which Josh had secured his own interests were neat enough, but the ramifications of his clients' affairs were numerous and intricate. In Lord Cheribert's case they were particularly so, because of his own recklessness and contempt for business transactions. It is distressing to a lawyer, when he asks a client in whom he feels a personal interest, "Is this your signature, my lord?" to be answered, "It looks like it, but I have not the faintest remembrance of ever having put it there."

Lord Cheribert had no recollection of any debt that wasn't a bet, which greatly impeded the settlement of his affairs. Sundry creditors were pressing him with their little accounts, and showing a strong disinclination to "let them run," even to the date when, as all the world now knew, Lord Morella was to come forward and show that a father had his duties as well as his privileges. In the aggregate these debts came to a large sum, though they sank into almost insignificance compared with the obligations due to the Tremenhere estate; those, however, we may be sure, were well secured, and the family could afford to wait; the family, indeed, knew nothing about them; it was not thought necessary by Mr. Allerton to go into such details with the ladies, and Mr. Roscoe, though of course he knew

all about them, had likewise abstained from communicating them. It was quite sufficient for the purposes of both those gentlemen that Lord Cheribert should know the facts.

It would no doubt have distressed the ladies to feel that their guest was their debtor, and would have made their relations with him not a little embarrassing; whereas it was the lawyer's secret hope that his client would see for himself how extremely convenient it would be to pay off 33⅓ per cent. of his obligations by a matrimonial union with one of the fair creditors. If he had thought of it, the probability is the effect would have been exactly the reverse of what was intended; but, as a matter of fact, the circumstance never occurred to him; Lord Cheribert never thought of his creditors.

Some of them, however, as has been said, thought a good deal of him (though not in an appreciatory sense), and were making themselves very unpleasant. Lord Morella could have stopped them with a word, but that word he would not speak till his son had given up his evil ways for good and all. He had promised to do so, as we know, at a certain date; but until that day arrived his father declined to have anything to do with him. His paternal affection was ready laid, like a housemaid's fire, but he positively declined to apply the match to it till after the 14th proximo, when his son's last steeple-chase was to come off. The earl had an immense reputation for "determination of character," and it was inherited by his son and heir, though in him he described it as the obstinacy of a pig. He would not advance a shilling to help him, nor permit his lawyer to advance one; and, on the other hand, the young man would not pay forfeit for the race in question, though the old lord would have gladly laid down the money twenty times over. Matters had come, in short, to a dead-lock, and the worst of it was that the circumstances greatly militated against the genuineness of the promised reconciliation between father and son. You can't hold over affection like an accommodation bill, nor postpone filial love to a particular date in the calendar; they are apt to grow cool in the mean time.

The lawyer had at least as much tact as members of his profession usually possess, and had endeavored to conciliate both sides—though he would have much preferred to knock their heads together—but his efforts were in vain; he began to fear that a public scandal could hardly be averted, and if that took place Lord Cheribert's chance with Grace would be seriously endangered; it was

difficult to hint to him of this peril, and if it had been done he would probably have thought little of it, he was himself so used to public scandals.

On the matter of his debts, indeed, he was—with men—entirely without reticence, and he not a little disconcerted the good lawyer by speaking of them in the smoking-room at Elm Place with his usual frankness.

"What *does* it matter?" he said, when reproached by Mr. Allerton for his imprudence. "*You* know all about them, Roscoe knows all about them; and to Sinclair, who, though an excellent fellow himself, has probably been witness to half the crimes in the calendar, and some outside it, the fact of a man's being in a hole as regards money matters can appear nothing very serious. Any talk of that kind must be to him like a description of a day with the rabbits on the hill after a tiger hunt; there is not enough sport in it to attract his attention."

The lawyer smiled; he was much too wise to press the point, or any point that was not absolutely essential, on "such a cat-a-mountain of a client"; but he thought it possible that the financial embarrassments of Lord Cheribert might have some attraction for Mr. Sinclair, notwithstanding their want of dramatic interest; nor, as it turned out, was he mistaken.

On the morning after the conversation in the smoking-room, Mr. Allerton, who was an early riser, found Sinclair on the lawn at Milton before breakfast, with a short black pipe in his mouth of the most reprehensible appearance.

"It's a bad habit, I know," said that young gentleman, noting the look which the lawyer bestowed upon his clay idol; "but our fellows breakfast late here, and there's nothing like tobacco for staying the appetite."

"So I should think," returned the lawyer, dryly; "if I was to smoke a pipe before breakfast, I should never eat anything all day."

"It does not interfere in that way with me at all, as you will see at breakfast-time," answered the young fellow, laughing; "and there have been days when want of appetite was not so much my difficulty as the want of anything to eat; then a pipe is a boon indeed."

"Things have been as bad as that with you, have they?" replied the lawyer; he rather liked his new acquaintance (save for that inexplicable civility of his to Roscoe), and was not unwilling to hear something of his past; it might come under the head of useful knowledge.

"Yes; one does not always get fresh eggs in the morning out West, and claret-cup"—he pointed to the place across the river where that compound was exceedingly well made, as they both knew —"is unknown at the diggings."

"At the diggings? You were there, were you? I hope you made your pile."

"I don't look like that, do I! I hope not."

The other did not understand what he meant, but saw no necessity to inquire; he was not in search of sentiments, but facts. Experience had taught him not to interrupt when his object was to obtain information. You may generally trust a man who is talking about himself to proceed with that interesting subject.

"Yes, I was the man who first found gold at One Tree Hill."

The lawyer nodded, as if he was as conversant with that locality as with Shooter's Hill or Primrose Hill.

"There were three of us," continued the young fellow, in a tone of a reminiscence, and with that far-off look in his eyes which the ladies had noticed; "we had but ten dollars among us, but it was not a place to spend much money in; not a hut within ten miles, and the nearest drinking-bar a long day's journey from us. I wish to Heaven," he added, with vehemence, "it had been farther still."

He paused; an observation seemed to be expected.

"Drink must be a great temptation in those out-of-the-way places," hazarded the lawyer.

"Not to *me*, sir," was the haughty rejoinder. "There is no man living who has ever seen Walter Sinclair drunk." Had Lord Cheribert been present it is possible he would have suggested that there might be more reasons than one for that; there was a certain solemnity in the young man's assertion that might well have provoked raillery; but it did not do so with Mr. Allerton. He understood that the conditions of existence of which the other was speaking were very different from his present ones, and that his boast was not only genuine, but had a justification. "However, better men than I have given way to liquor," continued Sinclair, modestly, "and it is easy to resist what has no attractions for one."

"It must be a great experience, that first finding of gold," remarked the lawyer, tentatively, like a huntsman casting for the scent.

The young man nodded assentingly. "Yes; for the moment it apppears as if one had found everything. To penniless men like us it seemed like heaven itself. The first nugget might be the last, of course, but it might also be wealth beyond the dreams of avarice.

Some men think of the gold itself; others, of what they will do with it. I had at that time a use for wealth, and my discovery filled me with delirious joy. Our first act was to solemnly swear that we would keep the matter secret from our fellow-creatures. We worked like galley-slaves, but for a rate of pay that would have satisfied a prime-minister. We had hit on a very rich lode. On the fourth day one of the two men who were prospecting with me disappeared. The other, when he missed him, uttered the most frantic execrations. 'What is the matter?' I said. 'Why should Dick have come to harm?' 'Harm!' he answered; 'I wish he had a bullet through his brain! He will bring harm to *us*. The mad fool is off to the drinking-bar.' 'But he will come back again, I suppose?' 'Yes, but with five thousand men to rob us of our rights.' He judged only too well. The doting wretch, having money in his pocket, or the equivalent of it, could not resist the demon for a dram; once in liquor, he began, of course, to boast of the new gold-diggings, and the morning of the third day saw a cloud of miners coming like locusts over the hill. They behaved fairly enough, and gave us the first choice of claim as discoverers. We elected to stay on our patch, and in a fortnight there was not another ounce of gold to be got in it, though we worked as hard as ever. Other men were more lucky, and made great fortunes; nor, indeed, had I any right to complain, since in that one month I made enough to keep me, I hope, and something over, for the remainder of my days."

"A golden month, indeed," observed the lawyer.

"Yet the vilest one man ever passed," answered the other, vehemently. "Greed is unpleasant enough to look upon in any shape, but as you see it naked and unshamed in a gold-field it is loathsome indeed. I should not have troubled you with such a story at all, Mr. Allerton, but for a reason; if it had not been told, you might have said to yourself, 'This rolling stone has probably gathered no moss,' and you would have been disinclined to believe in my solvency."

"Why should you say that?" said the lawyer, smiling. He meant of course to be complimentary; to imply that no suspicion of his companion's want of means had ever entered his mind; but the other took him *au pied de la lettre*.

"Well, for this reason. I was obliged to overhear Lord Cheribert's talk last night about his private affairs. It seems there is some hitch about the immediate settlement of certain debts, which may cause him some embarrassment; I don't understand the matter,

but I wish to say that £5,000 or so of what I possess is ready to my hand, and very much at his service."

"Do I understand that you offer to lend Lord Cheribert £5,000 on his note of hand?"

"Certainly; or without it."

It was a matter of professional principle with Mr. Allerton never to be surprised at anything, but this proposition fairly staggered him. It was evident that the man who made it was no fool, and must therefore very well comprehend that his proposition, if carried into effect, would do away with the one advantage he possessed over his rival (if such, as the lawyer suspected, Lord Cheribert was) in being free from financial embarrassment; nay, he must be aware, from what had passed in the smoking-room, that the existence of these debts of his lordship's threatened him with public exposure, which must be prejudicial indeed to any matrimonial project. Yet here was this young fellow actually offering to supply his rival with the sinews of war—and love. As a matter of fact, the offer could not be accepted, and would be utterly insufficient if it was. Mr. Allerton, of course, could have raised any amount of money to supply the young lord's temporary needs; but this Lord Morella had positively forbidden him to do.

The young lord could not raise the sum required on his own security, and his father hoped to use his helplessness as a lever to effect his own object, namely, Lord Cheribert's immediate retirement from the turf. To have taken Sinclair's money (even had it been sufficient) would have been to break his word to the old lord, which Mr. Allerton was incapable of doing; but nothing of this was, of course, known to Sinclair, and the thought of the young man's unselfish generosity moved the old lawyer very much.

"You are a capital fellow, Sinclair," he exclaimed, "and I thank you five thousand times on behalf of my young friend and client; but your offer, liberal as it is, is useless to him; I am sorry and ashamed to say it would be a mere drop in the ocean."

"I am sorry," observed the other, gravely. "Perhaps I ought to have known as much. I hope," he added, with a quick flush, "that you do not think I did know it, Mr. Allerton?"

"I am quite sure you did not. Your offer, I am convinced, was as genuine as it was generous. Will you gratify a curiosity that is not mere inquisitiveness and tell me why you made it?"

"Well, it is hardly worth talking about, and especially since it has come to nothing; but the fact is, even if I had been so fortunate as

to help Lord Cheribert out of a tight place, the obligation would still have been on my side. When *I* was in a tight place, in trouble with the weeds down yonder"—and he pointed over his shoulder in the direction of Milton lasher—"it was all they could do, I have been told, to prevent Lord Cheribert from coming to drown with me. He did kick off his shoes to do it. One doesn't forget a thing like that, you know."

"But you had done the same, it seems, for a dog?"

"I? That was very different. I was used to taking my life in my hand, as a thing not especially valuable. Don't mistake me for one of the mock-modest ones; I think myself every bit as good as his lordship, or any other lord in the land. But that is not *his* view, I reckon. Here was a young fellow who thought a huge lot of himself, and of whom other people thought more, ready to fling his all away on the off chance of saving a mere loafer, a nobody. Of course you will not tell him one word of this."

"Of course not; here's my hand upon it. And now, Mr. Sinclair, if I have not exhausted your patience, just one question more. What is the obligation that binds you to Mr. Roscoe? He didn't kick off *his* shoes, I'll be sworn."

"I am under no obligation to Mr. Roscoe."

"No, but you think you are. At all events, you behave as if you were. Come, you must not be angry with an old fellow who has nothing but your good at heart, or, what will weigh with you more, the good of another whom you esteem, I think. I say again it is not mere inquisitiveness that makes me put the question. Why do you pay such deference to Mr. Roscoe?"

"He not being one of my own sort at all, as you would seem to say," returned the young man, smiling. "Well, I don't know that he is. But he has a brother—Dick—who was one of the firmest friends (though not a very lucky one) that my poor father ever had, and for his sake I can't help leaning towards Mr. Edward perhaps a trifle more than he deserves. Dick is coming home this autumn, I am glad to hear."

"Indeed!" was the dry rejoinder. "Well, in the mean time, my dear Mr. Sinclair, take my advice, and when leaning towards Mr. Edward be very careful not to lean *on* him, for he's not the kind of prop that stands a strain. Come, let us go in to breakfast."

CHAPTER XXIII.

GOOD ADVICE.

It was curious, since Walter Sinclair was but a chance visitor of the Tremenheres, with whom their acquaintance would probably not at most outlast their occupancy of Elm Place, that Mr. Allerton should have troubled himself to give that word of warning to the young fellow. His motives for so doing were mixed, and perhaps not recognized even by himself. He had not only a well-grounded distrust, but a very cordial dislike of Mr. Roscoe, which would have prompted him to set any one on his guard whom he perceived to be subject to that gentleman's influence; but he had also begun to entertain a liking for Sinclair, almost in spite of himself. Home-trained young gentlemen who, instead of becoming clerks to respectable solicitors, or embracing other decent professions in their own country, emigrated to uncivilized climes and tried their luck in gold-fields, were not, as a rule, at all to his taste. He had, as we know, even entertained the suspicion that this young man had been a creature of Roscoe himself, and, at all events, felt it to be a mistake that a person of his condition had been allowed to attain a familiar footing with such a family as the Tremenheres. Now he certainly thought differently upon these points. There was a frankness about the young man that disarmed his doubts, and an independence of character that no longer seemed to him the impudence of the adventurer.

The generosity of his late offer was something altogether out of the lawyer's experience, and made a deep impression on him. For a moment it had struck him that though Sinclair had imposed silence about it to Lord Cheribert, he might not have been as unwilling for Grace to hear of it; but that he dismissed from his mind as an unworthy suspicion. He felt that Sinclair was incapable of such a method of recommending himself, while at the same time the action convinced him that he had no serious intention of becoming her suitor; it would in that case have been putting weapons into the hand of an adversary which neither gratitude nor chivalry demanded—a mere quixotic act. Assured, therefore, that there was

no danger of that kind to be apprehended, Mr. Allerton allowed his liking for the young fellow to have free course. He praised him to Grace, and he praised him to Lord Cheribert, and was pleased to find that they both shared his good opinion of him.

With the elder Misses Tremenhere Sinclair also appeared to be a favorite; Mr. Roscoe—but this was not placed to the credit side of the young man's account—treated him with marked civility. To any outsider, indeed, like Sinclair himself, who knew nothing of Agnes and Philippa as volcanoes, whose eruption was suppressed with difficulty by a master-hand, the company at Elm Place seemed a very pleasant one, who had little to think about beyond amusement and making themselves agreeable.

At the best, however, it was evident it was but a holiday party.

"You will miss your guests when you leave Elm Place," said Mr. Allerton to Miss Agnes; "Cumberland will seem just a little *triste* at first, I fear."

"Lord Cheribert has promised to look in upon us; he has taken rooms at the Angler's Rest for the fishing."

"Indeed!" This was news to Mr. Allerton, and good news. "That will be very pleasant both for him and for you."

"And Mr. Sinclair talks of coming, too, upon the same errand."

"Indeed!" He used the same word, but with a very different intonation. Matters, then, were much more serious in that quarter than he had anticipated. Sinclair had told him, when he had remonstrated with him in a paternal way on having no profession, that he rather thought of becoming a civil engineer. But the vicinity of Halswater Hall was hardly suitable for the prosecution of that design. He could not bring himself to believe that the young fellow could think of entering the lists against Lord Cheribert; but the circumstance determined him to speak a word or two with his client. The more he thought of the young lord's difficulties the more he felt convinced that a union with Grace was the best and quickest way out of them, supposing, only, that her father's will could be set aside—a matter which, though he could not well move in it himself, he felt could be accomplished by mutual agreement. It was curious, considering his own strong religious convictions, that Grace's faith did not present an insurmountable obstacle; but she was certainly not strongly attached to her creed; and it is observable that whereas religious persons exceedingly resent any apostasy from their own communion, they think it the most natural thing in the world that others should exchange theirs for it.

So, when he and his client were strolling in the woods one day, he suddenly observed to him—it must be confessed, rather *à propos des bottes;* but the other, as he justly guessed, by design never gave him the least chance of alluding to the subject—"Well, I hope Miss Grace is as great a favorite of yours as she is of mine, Cheribert."

"How can you ask such a question?" was the unexpected rejoinder, delivered in the driest of tones. "Miss Grace is a favorite with everybody."

"Well, that is one of the reasons why I did ask it," returned the lawyer. He was piqued by the young man's unwillingness to confide in him, and also irritated by the indifference he had all along exhibited to the dangerous condition of his affairs. "It is really time, Cheribert, that you took things more seriously. I had hoped from finding you here that you had some motive beyond merely enjoying yourself—which is, after all, not the end of life."

"I have come to that conclusion myself, Allerton, but, I am afraid, a little late."

The unexpected mildness of the reply disarmed the lawyer; there was also a tone of penitence in it still more surprising, and which he rightly judged could be only attributable to some new and gentle influence.

"With a man of your age nothing in the way of amendment can be too late," he answered. "Notwithstanding all that has come and gone yet, there is nothing to despair of in your case. The race of life, to use a metaphor that is familiar to you, is in heats; we have most of us more than one run for our money; you have lost the first heat, that is all."

"For my part," returned the young lord, grimly, "I am inclined to think life a toss-up, the best out of three to win, and that I have lost the first toss. In either case the chances against me are considerable. Five to two is the betting, but the real odds are three to one."

"As a very old friend, and one, I hope, incapable of an impertinence," observed the lawyer, gently, "might I hazard a guess at the particular 'event' you have on your mind, Cheribert?"

"There is no need to guess; you may take it, if you please, for granted," replied the young man, frankly.

"Let me say at once, then, that I am glad to hear you tell me so," answered Mr. Allerton, cordially. "For a man in your position there is always a fresh start in life—unless, indeed, he makes a false one—in marriage. His past is forgotten; his future is once more in his own hands."

"And the lady's," suggested the young lord, smiling.

"Just so; and in the case we are considering it could not be better placed. It would be idle, however, to conceal from you, Cheribert, that there will be great difficulties in what you are proposing to yourself—difficulties in gaining your father's consent, difficulties as regards the law—though in both these matters you may rely on my doing my very best to help you."

"You have again forgotten the lady," observed the other, dryly.

"No, I have not. There will also, as you say, be difficulties, no doubt, in that quarter. It will be, of course, absolutely necessary that you should possess the same faith."

"All right. I am completely at her disposal so far—a very easy convert."

"Cheribert, I am astonished at you! On a subject of this kind I did hope you would forbear to jest."

"Still, one of us, as it seems, will have to do it."

It is quite right to be simple and unsophisticated, but people ought to know where to stop—at all events, to refrain from blurting out unpleasant truths. Mr. Allerton felt quite embarrassed.

"The case of Miss Grace," he answered, obliquely, "is very peculiar. She is not devoted to the faith of her fathers."

"As *I* am," murmured the young lord; but the other ignored the sarcasm.

"In point of fact," he continued, with a forced smile, "it is doubtful whether our old friend 'Josh' was ever a Jew at all; it is my belief he only pretended to be so, with the object of making himself unpleasant as a testator. His family were not brought up in that religion, or, if they were, only very loosely. I am pretty sure we shall not find that matter an insuperable obstacle."

"I am quite sure of it," observed Lord Cheribert, dryly.

The reply, and still more the tone of it, was far from satisfactory to his companion, but it was a relief to him to have done with the topic.

"Well, what I venture to advise, Cheribert, is that there should be as little delay as possible in proceeding with this very important matter. Something has come to my knowledge—which you must excuse my going into—that makes it highly desirable that you and the young lady should come to some mutual understanding. It has nothing to do with the other matters which are pressing upon your attention, though I need hardly say that they would cease to be so very urgent in case the affair in question could be brought to a successful issue."

"It seems to be rather a matter of business, nevertheless," observed the young man, coldly.

"My dear Cheribert, your position does not admit of your settling your matrimonial affairs with the same ease as yonder ploughboy, nor even as a young gentleman such as Mr. Walter Sinclair, for example, with no impediments of birth and rank, not to mention other encumbrances of your own making."

The lawyer waited a moment to see whether the mention of Sinclair's name awakened any sign of suspicion in his young friend, but it seemed to have made no impression upon him whatever. His face was graver far than he had ever seen it, but quite unruffled. "Yes, Cheribert," he continued, "for you—if you insist upon plainness of speech—marriage must be to some extent a bargain. There must be give and take on both sides; certain stipulations must be made; certain arrangements, tacit or expressed, agreed upon. It will not be necessary, of course, for you to go into them with the lady herself; her own good sense will point them out to her. She will understand that there are, and must be, contingencies— But you are not, I perceive, favoring me with your attention."

The lawyer spoke with severity, and like a man whose feelings were hurt; his tone, rather than what he said, roused the other from his abstraction.

If Mr. Allerton imagined that mere weariness of serious talk—as indeed had often been the case before—was affecting his companion, he did him an injustice. Lord Cheribert was serious enough himself, though it was quite true that he had not heard one word of what the other had just addressed to him.

"Pardon me, Allerton," he said, in his gentlest manner, and with his most winning smile—"I am not unconscious, believe me, of the good service you were trying to do me. I was only wondering how it came about that it should be worth your while, or any man's while, to take so much trouble on my account, being as I am such a worthless vagabond."

"I should not permit your enemies—if, indeed, you have any—to say that in my hearing, my lord," said the lawyer, gently. He was touched by the young man's self-abasement. If only his father could see him at this moment, was his inward thought, how smoothly things would be made for him.

"You would do all that is kind and friendly, I am quite sure," continued Lord Cheribert, gravely, "but that would not alter the fact, you know, nor people's opinion of me."

"Let us hope that *everybody*, at all events, will not be of that opinion," said Mr. Allerton, smiling significantly; "I would put that to the test at once if I were you."

"But how should she *know?*" said the young man, bitterly. "It is a noble reflection, indeed, to feel that one's hope of happiness in the future lies in a woman's ignorance of one's past."

"It is a position, nevertheless, in which a good many men who go a-wooing must needs find themselves," returned the lawyer, dryly; "'faint heart never won fair lady,' my lord, is a good motto. I am bound for town to-day, as you know. Will it be too much to ask of you to drop me a line to say how you have prospered in this matter?"

Lord Cheribert nodded and held out his hand, which the other warmly grasped. Two men with less in common as to pursuits and opinions it would have been difficult to find; the difference in their ages, great as it was, was slight compared with the diversity of their minds; but they had a very genuine friendship for one another. The lawyer had never felt his regard for his young client so strongly—which afterwards, through certain circumstances, became a source of satisfaction to him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AU REVOIR.

As it is better, the doctors tell us, to leave off eating with an appetite than to stuff ourselves to repletion, so it is with respect to taking holiday. It is quite possible to have too much of even pleasure and leisure, as idle people find to their cost. To the toiler, bound to be back at his work by a certain date, it often seems the height of happiness if, like more fortunate men, he could remain *sine die* by the sea-side, or at the lakes, where he has spent such happy days; he thinks that he could never tire out the welcome that kindly nature for so brief a space has offered him; but in this he is mistaken. Amusement without work, too far prolonged, is like veal without bacon, or sturgeon, a fish that is thought very highly of by those who have not tasted it. To Walter Sinclair, when the time came for him to return to town, it seemed that in leaving Elm Place he was quitting Eden. There was no such compulsion on him as there was with our first parents; but he had business in town in connection with that civil engineer affair, about which he had unfort-

unately taken Mr. Allerton into his confidence; the lawyer had aided him in the matter, and an appointment had been made with certain persons which he could hardly decline to keep. Moreover, Mr. Allerton was bound for town himself, and had offered to be his travelling companion. There was only a week or two more in which river life could have had its attractions for him, but still he was loath to leave it; and much he envied Lord Cheribert, who, as he imagined (though on this particular occasion he was mistaken), was free to go or stay, as he pleased, wherever he would. He had had no previous acquaintance of the pleasures of home, and far less of a home of pleasure, and he would have thoroughly enjoyed himself but for a vague longing for a certain something which he felt to be beyond his reach. His general views of life, which, if somewhat crude, were honest and wholesome enough, had in no way altered; rank was to him still but the guinea-stamp, and personal merit the only test of superiority that he acknowledged; but he had become aware, during the last few weeks, that other people, for whom he had a respect, and who had treated him with hospitality, thought very differently about these things. The comforts and luxuries with which he had seen them surrounded, though he cared little or nothing for them himself, had made an impression on him; he felt that to those who were accustomed to them they might appear as necessary as his short black pipe and screw of tobacco were to him, and of course he had not the power to bestow them. He knew nothing of the provisions of Mr. Tremenhere's will, but believed all of the ladies to be heiresses; and, though he had been a gold-digger, Walter Sinclair was not a fortune-hunter.

There was nothing in Indian life that had so disgusted him—for he had not had the same cruel experience of it that his father had had—as their treatment of their women, who toiled and slaved for them while they took their pleasure. To him a woman was not only an object of reverence, but something to be worked for, and he would have scorned to owe his wealth to the bounty of a wife. Nevertheless, Grace Tremenhere was as sweet and attractive to him as the flower to the bee, though he had no intention of making honey out of her; and he found it a much sadder business than he expected, when the time came, to say "good-bye" to her. Considering that she was only one of his three hostesses, and not the chief one, it might have been thought that he might have been contented with a general farewell; but somehow, though he would have shaken hands, even had it been for the last time, with the two elder sisters

in the presence of each other without the least embarrassment, he felt that his *au revoir* to Grace (for he had been encouraged, we know, to come to Cumberland) should be said to her alone.

He found his opportunity on the camp-shed, where from the other bank he had seen her walking alone before breakfast, and shot across in his skiff, like an arrow from the bow, to join her.

"You are an earlier riser than your friends, Mr. Sinclair," she observed, with a welcoming smile.

"It has not been necessary for them, as it has often been for me," he said, "to shoot or catch their breakfasts; and the habit lasts when the necessity no longer exists."

"For my part," she replied, "I love the early summer mornings, and am always out in them, though I have never felt the spur you speak of; if I had to catch my breakfast, to judge by my usual performance with the fishing-rod, I should be dreadfully hungry before I got it."

"Heaven forbid, Miss Grace, that you should ever know such straits!" he answered, fervently.

"Why not? On the contrary, I have come to the conclusion that it would be better for all of us—just as every German has to be a common soldier—if we had some personal experience of the hard lot that falls to so many of our fellow-creatures. There is nothing like a personal experience for begetting sympathy."

"No; a hard life would not suit you, or rather, I should say (for I am sure you would bear it bravely), would not be suitable to you. The spectacle of it," he added, gently, "would, moreover, be distressing to others."

"And who am I, and what have I done, Mr. Sinclair, that I should be exempt from the common lot of humanity?" she answered, smiling, but with some touch of indignation too. "Do you picture me as designed by Providence to loll in a carriage and think of everybody on foot as beneath my notice?"

"Oh no—oh no!" he answered, softly; "my view of you is very different. You remember our glorious day last week at Windsor, and how we enjoyed that noble park, which has not its rival, so far as I know, in all the world? Well, to me, Miss Grace, you are very like that park."

The color rushed to her cheeks, though she made him a mock courtesy as if at the extravagance of the compliment.

"Oh, I don't mean that way only," he said, simply, "but in your relation to others. Some of my friends, with whom on most other

matters I agree, think that that park is too large a place to be used for what *they* call 'ornamental purposes'—a poor phrase, in my opinion, to apply to its historic and native splendors; they want it to be turned into allotments for the benefit of the poor. That might do good to a few people of the present generation, and rob all England that is to be of its brightest jewel. *You* would make an excellent allotment, no doubt—I mean, if you had to work for your bread, you would do it better than most young ladies; but it would be a waste of power, just as it would be in me, should I become the great engineer Mr. Allerton is so good as to prophesy, to knock nails in a boiler; while at the same time the effect which you and your surroundings produce upon all beholders would be lost."

"It seems that my surroundings are of some importance," she answered, dryly.

"Not so important as appropriate," he replied; "the most beautiful picture owes something to its frame, and may even suffer from bad mounting. You would not have a jewel set in pewter."

Though he spoke the language of flattery, it was without its tone; his air, if an air of any kind could be imputed to him, was one of quiet conviction. Grace resented this exceedingly, though she did not recognize the reason; she had begun to have a greater liking for this jewel set in pewter, or, let us say, this "rough diamond," than she was herself aware of, and to be desirous of his good opinion, but by no means of this sort of homage.

A true woman prefers to be admired for something that belongs to herself, be it ever so small a thing, rather than for the advantages of her position—for her carriage (for instance) rather than for her carriage and horses. She dislikes to be placed on a pinnacle by one for whom she has a genuine regard, because it means isolation. Distance may lend enchantment to the view, but the remark is not flattering to the object.

"I am not accustomed to receive these high-flown compliments, Mr. Sinclair," she said, stiffly.

"If I have offended you let my ignorance plead for me," he answered, humbly. "As to compliments, I was not aware that I was paying them; and as to high-flown ones, they would be altogether beyond my reach. I need not tell you that I am unaccustomed to the ways of you and yours; still, I should be sorry, very sorry, for you to think me that worst kind of boor who clothes his fustian thought in tinsel."

"Indeed, indeed, I did not think so."

"Thanks, Miss Grace. You would not hurt a fly, far less the feelings of a man who (I hope you know) is deeply grateful to you, and who would do all he could to show it."

"I take your good-will for granted," she answered, smiling; "but I am at a loss to know in what I have laid you under an obligation."

"I suppose so," he answered, simply. "You are as ignorant—if I may once more recur to my unfortunate metaphor—as Windsor Park itself of the benefits you bestow. It is well, no doubt, that it should be so; though, since you take such pleasure in the happiness of others, it seems a pity you should be unaware of conferring it. To me, Miss Grace, these last few weeks have been the happiest days I ever spent, or ever shall spend."

He paused, and looked at her with such tender earnestness and gratitude that her eyes drooped before his gaze. "The river life is so pleasant," she said, hurriedly, "and we have been so fortunate in the weather."

"Yes; but it seems to me that there would be sunshine in Elm Place even though it were blowing blizzards. Well, that is over," he added, with a sigh, "and I am come to say good-bye. I return this morning with Mr. Allerton to town."

She was unaware that any such arrangement had been made, and the news affected her strongly; she felt her heart "go" in a most unusual manner, and then, like a swimmer who has overspent himself, sink down, down. She knew that her voice trembled, in spite of all her efforts to keep it calm, as she replied:

"We shall all, I am sure, miss you very much, Mr. Sinclair."

"That seems to be impossible, though it is pleasant hearing," he answered, gently. "I am not much accustomed to be missed; and of all the homes in England I should think this one the most independent of a stranger's coming or going."

How little, she thought, must this man know of her home! But his lack of perception of its true character was a recommendation to her rather than otherwise; it was no want of observation, as she well understood, for he was shrewd enough, that caused his ignorance, but the sense of gratitude for his hospitable reception which had prevented its exercise. She was touched, too, by his humility in the matter, because it was not in accordance with his nature, of which she had made unconscious note.

"I am sorry that you should still consider yourself a stranger to us," she answered, kindly.

"I am endeavoring not to consider myself at all," he replied,

impulsively. The words were significant enough, but the tone in which they were uttered bespoke an intense emotion; directly they had left his lips he would have recalled them; the confession of his inmost thought had been rapture to him—a certain desperate wild delight—but he now bitterly accused himself for having expressed it. It was selfish, it was cowardly; it was not in his power, perhaps, to have given his companion pain, but it was evident that he had caused her embarrassment. A silence ensued between them which was more expressive than any commentary. Grace herself felt as if she could have bitten her tongue out for having given him what must have seemed "an encouragement," and was resolved, since he took such advantage of his opportunities, that he should not have another. "I mean," he stammered, "that I shall always think of Elm Place as something apart from the rest of the world, myself included. There are some scenes, as I dare say you have felt, which strike one so by their restful beauty that, when we recall them, they seem to have belonged to some other sphere, and to be apart from our personal experience."

"Really? I have no recollection of any such, but then I have not enjoyed your advantages of travel."

"My advantages?" he answered, bitterly. "The compulsory wanderings of a vagabond are not generally looked upon in that light. I do not flatter myself for a moment that I shall be remembered here. If one of your sisters should some day say to you, 'Do you recollect that uncouth young fellow from America or somewhere who used to visit us when we lived on the river?' and you are so good as to say 'Yes,' I know I ought to be perfectly satisfied; but on my side my feelings will be very different. I came here utterly unknown to you all, as, indeed, I still am; I am not such a fool as to suppose that, like Lord Cheribert, I bring my welcome with me, and yet I have been received with the same hospitality and kindness. It is an experience I am not likely to forget, believe me."

Again his tone, freighted with tenderness and pathos, conveyed infinitely more than his words; his thanks, too, which by right were due to Miss Agnes as head of the house, seemed to Grace, though he had not actually said so, to be addressed to her personally.

Under ordinary circumstances it would even so have been easy enough for her to acknowledge them; but she found it far from easy. She could not trust her voice to speak for her. Fortunately at that moment Rip came running down the lawn to them, and leaped into her arms.

"Here is one friend who at least should always remember you, Mr. Sinclair."

"The dear little doggie! Well, even if he owed me something for pulling him out of the lasher, he has since repaid me fifty-fold."

The little creature, if he had but known it, was adding to his obligations now; its dumb caresses reminded the girl of the moment when she had seen this young fellow leap into the flood to save her favorite, like a river-god, but without the security of his immortality. How nearly he had perished for little Rip's sake—and hers! It was necessary that she should hide her heart indeed from him, since she felt utterly unable to harden it.

"Though I say good-bye, Miss Grace," he continued, after a pause, "it is not, I am glad to think, for the last time."

"Indeed!" She smiled and raised her eyebrows, as if in pleased surprise.

"Did you not know," he stammered, "that your sister had invited—at least had spoken of there being good fishing in the neighborhood of your Cumberland home, and kindly expressed a wish that I should try it?"

"To be sure," she cried; "I had forgotten."

His countenance fell, and he turned deadly pale.

It was cruel of her, but not so cruel to him as to herself; for while she thus kept him at arm's-length, and farther, she was hugging the dog to her bosom for his sake.

"It was only natural you should have done so," he answered, calmly. "To you it must have seemed so very small a matter; but on my side—as I was just saying—things look so differently. Good-bye, Miss Grace."

"But will you not breakfast with us?"

"No, thanks, no. I will just go in and take leave of your sisters. Good-bye, little doggie"—he took up the little creature's paw—"I owe you many thanks. Your mistress will not even shake my hand, so I shake yours."

Grace laughed and put out her hand, which trembled as he took it. "I do not say good-bye," she said, "because it is only, it seems, to be *au revoir*."

It was not much to say, nor was the manner with which it was said, though gracious, particularly encouraging; but to Walter Sinclair, though there was nothing of exultation in his manner of taking leave, for it was respectful even to reverence, it seemed a great deal, and made a great difference.

CHAPTER XXV.

A DETERMINED SUITOR.

BREAKFAST that morning at Elm Place was even a duller meal than usual. The two elder sisters never seemed to wake up to life till Mr. Roscoe and the rest crossed the river; they sat in sullen silence, save when it was absolutely necessary to speak to one another, and were so studiously and pointedly polite to Grace (to show how they could appreciate a kinswoman worthy of their attention) that she almost wished they had sent her also to Coventry. Nevertheless, she always did her best to keep up the conversation, though it was like playing lawn-tennis alone against a double. But this morning, somehow, she was not equal to the strain. The words Walter Sinclair had spoken to her with such passionate energy, "I am endeavoring not to consider myself at all," were still ringing in her ears; she had recognized their meaning, but not what had caused their utterance. If he had said, "I am endeavoring not to think of *you*," he could hardly have expressed himself more plainly. And why should he endeavor not to think of her? At the moment this question, which had naturally suggested itself, had filled her with vague suspicions of him. There had been that in his manner which she could not mistake for mere friendship—a tenderness hidden by the veil of an exaggerated admiration, or forcibly repressed. The idea of the difference of their positions, as regarded wealth, never entered into her mind, and would have seemed to her, had it done so, to be the last to enter into his. She did not understand how independence of character could be associated with a humility born of convention—it was more probable that there were other and far stronger reasons for his reticence. As he had said himself, he was a stranger to them still; concealment, indeed, of any kind, seemed foreign to his character. But for all she knew about him he might have been a married man. The idea was abhorrent to her, and had been dismissed at once, for, in truth, she believed him incapable of a baseness, but there was certainly *something* that tied his tongue. Moreover, with the inconsistency of her sex, she resented his having spoken to her even as he had done upon so short

an acquaintance, and on such very slight encouragement. It had therefore come to pass that she had "snubbed" him—or (as it now appeared to her) had treated him with unnecessary and uncalled-for harshness. To pretend to have forgotten that he had been invited to come to the North had been, in particular, she felt, a piece of wanton cruelty; and his humble reply, "It was only natural you should have forgotten," was as an arrow that had gone home to her very heart. She had, it was true, at parting, shown that she took it for granted they were to meet again, but she had not even expressed a wish that they should do so, as she would have done to any ordinary guest; and now, alas! she knew the reason why. He had not been an ordinary guest, but one that her heart had been entertaining in its inmost chamber unawares, and she had only discovered it when it was too late. After such a dismissal, it was hardly likely that he would risk a second one, and it was probable that she had lost him forever. It was no wonder that her heart was heavy within her and her tongue slow to speak. She found balm, however, in a Gilead where she least expected it, and where the soil did not often produce that commodity.

"So you had your 'good-bye' from Mr. Sinclair on the campshed, I suppose, Grace?" said Miss Agnes; "I hope he was as effusive as he was to us."

"He seemed very grateful for such hospitality as we were able to show him," answered Grace, gently.

"Grateful! I never had my hand so squeezed before!" continued Agnes. "One would have thought I had given him a thousand pounds."

Philippa broke into a little laugh, not, it is to be feared, at the pleasantry, which, indeed, was hardly deserving of it, so much as at the want of experience in hand-squeezing to which the speaker had so imprudently confessed.

"However, he is an honest young fellow," continued Agnes, "and I was glad to hear him renew his promise of looking in upon us at Halswater."

For this good news, had it not been for the presence of her other sister, and from fear that the action might be imputed to an association of ideas, Grace could have thrown her arms round Agnes's neck and kissed her.

"We are going to lose Mr. Allerton this morning also," observed Philippa, "and in the afternoon Lord Cheribert. It is very inconsiderate of the gentlemen thus to desert us all together."

"Is Lord Cheribert going?" inquired Grace, with interest.

"Yes; did you not know it?"

The two elder ladies changed significant glances. The "little affairs" of their younger sister were common ground, and almost the only ones on which they could meet without bickering.

"No, I did not know it," said Grace. "We shall miss him very much."

"You did not favor Mr. Sinclair, my dear, with that expression of your regret," observed Agnes, slyly.

"We have known Lord Cheribert longer," replied Grace, innocently, but blushing to her ear-tips.

"To be sure; I suppose we have seen him twice before," remarked Philippa, with quiet enjoyment, "which, of course, makes a great difference."

Grace felt that her sisters were amusing themselves at her expense, but bore it with great sweetness, and the more easily since, with all their sagacity, it was clear that they were altogether on a false scent. It was not in human nature to resist leading them a little further astray.

"I suppose Lord Cheribert is going simply because he is tired of us," she observed, with a little pout; "there can be no business to demand his attention."

"Well, it isn't exactly business, of course, my dear," said Agnes, soothingly; "but you know how he is wedded—for the present—to sporting affairs; it is to keep some appointment at a steeple-chase, I believe, that he is obliged to be away. But it is to be his last appearance in the saddle; after which he will be reconciled to his father, and assume his proper position in the world."

"When, I suppose, we shall never see him again," observed Grace, with a little sigh.

"That remains to be proved, my dear," said Agnes, encouragingly. "Like Mr. Sinclair, he has *promised*, you know, to come and see us at Halswater. It would be only civil, by-the-bye, if you were to remind him of it; then, if he *does* come, we shall know the reason, shall we not?"

"We shall be able, at all events, to make a tolerable guess at it," smiled her sister.

Like a general whose courage has carried him too far into the enemy's country, Grace would now have been very ready to retreat from the position whither her little joke had carried her, when, fortunately, she was released by the arrival of the subject of their

conversation, in company with Mr. Roscoe, by boat. Mr. Allerton had sent his apologies for not taking leave in person; he had overslept himself, and had no time to spare to catch the train for town. The shadow of departure seemed to sit upon Lord Cheribert's face; he was so much more silent than usual that Agnes rallied him upon it.

"How could it be otherwise," he said, gently, "since I, too, am leaving Elm Place? We are like boys whose holiday is over and are going back to work."

"Yet somebody has just been saying that your life is all holiday," observed Agnes, laughing.

"Indeed! I am afraid she meant, however, all idleness, which is something very different," answered the young man, gravely. He did not look towards Grace, but she knew that he attributed the remark to herself, and would have given much to have been able to disclaim it. She would have, somehow, preferred that he should not take notice of her at all that morning.

This, however, was not to be. Agnes soon left the room, on pretence of some matters of the house requiring her attention, and Philippa took Mr. Roscoe out with her upon the lawn, perhaps without design (for she never lost an opportunity of being alone with him), but after what her sisters had been saying to Grace, it had an uncomfortable sense to her of design. Lord Cheribert and herself were thus left alone.

"As it is my last morning, Miss Grace," he said, with his pleasant smile, but in a tone much more serious than usual, "might I ask a favor of you?" Before she could reply (a circumstance for which she felt strangely thankful) he added, "It is only that we should take that walk on the hill together which we took when I first came."

She answered, as lightly as she could, "By all means," and put on her hat, which "on the river" ladies have never to go far for. As they left the house she stopped to call the dog—a natural action enough, but one which she had never before felt so impelled to do. It was extraordinary how much dearer Rip had grown to be to her within the last hour.

"How fond you are of that little creature! it ought to be a happy doggie," said Lord Cheribert.

"I don't know about that; but he likes, I think, to be with me—'the off-and-on companion of my walks,' as Wordsworth calls it."

"I wish I was good at poetry," sighed the young man; "but, unfortunately, I am good at nothing."

"I should be sorry to think that, Lord Cheribert."

"But you *do* think it; how can it be otherwise? Not that I mind your doing it—that is, of course, I wish I were more worthy of your good opinion; but I had rather be brought to book by you—by Jove, I would—than praised by other people!"

"I was really not aware that I had ever 'brought you to book,' as you call it, Lord Cheribert. I suppose it's a sporting expression."

"Don't laugh at me, please, Miss Grace," he answered, humbly; "scold me as much as you please—it does me good—but don't laugh at me."

"It is rather difficult to help it, when you talk of my doing you good."

"Ah, but you do. No one in the world has ever done it but you. School-masters have tried it, dons have tried it, the governor has tried it; but they might just as well have thrown water on a duck's back. I was dry the next moment. But from the day I first saw you—no, the day you had the kindness to talk to me in this very place—Heaven knows how long ago, but it seems a century—"

"That is not very complimentary to your entertainers at Elm Place," she put in, quietly.

"Now you are laughing again at me; I don't think you would do it if you knew how cruel it was. What I mean is, not that the time has been heavy on my hands here, Heaven knows, but that what has happened to me seems more important than all that has happened anywhere else. I feel as if half my life has been passed here and half elsewhere; and the two halves have been *so* different!"

He paused, and she said "Yes?"—a ridiculous and ineffectual monosyllable, as she was well aware; but what *was* she to say? His manner was so earnest, his tone so tender, his look so beseeching, that she could hardly believe it was Lord Cheribert.

"There is a verse, I know not from what author, the governor used to be fond of quoting to me on a Sunday," he continued, "'Between the stirrup and the ground mercy I sought, mercy I found'—a religious version, I suppose, of 'It's never too late to mend,' and one, I conclude, which he thought especially applicable to me as a racing man. If Providence is really so kind to a sinner, cannot you also hold out some hope to him?"

They were standing on a spur of the hill, with the wood at their back and a great expanse of landscape beneath them; the river with its fairy fleet winding for miles till it shrank to a thread; men

and women at their labor in the fields; cattle in their pasture; but not a sound came up to them. The world seemed to be lying at their feet, but they far removed from it. It was a scene one of them never forgot.

"It is not to an ignorant girl like me that you should apply, Lord Cheribert, in such matters as you speak of; they are altogether too high for me. I can only say, with one of the greatest of our fellow-creatures on his death-bed, 'Be a good man; nothing else can comfort you.'"

"That is all that I want you to say, Grace, provided only that you will teach me to be one. Priests are no use to me. It is from you alone that I have learned to understand my own worthlessness. My fate is in your hands."

"In *mine*, my lord?" she answered, with a faint pretence of misunderstanding him. "What would you have me do?"

"Give me your love; or, if that is impossible, as indeed it well may be at present, give me hope. I can be patient enough with such a prize in view, and though I shall never be worthy of it, I will try, every day and every hour, to make myself more so. You see, dear Grace"—here he smiled so brightly that it seemed hard indeed to say him nay—"I have so many advantages on my side; every step which is not astray, and of which other men would have nothing to congratulate themselves upon, will be to me a clear gain; I have been, until I knew you, so exceedingly disreputable. You may say, indeed," he continued, cheerfully, "that that of itself is no recommendation; but when you see me or hear of me becoming more and more as you would wish me to be, and know that it is all your doing, you will begin to take just a little pride in me, as in the work of your own hands. When people ask me, as they will be sure to do, what is the meaning of this reformation, I shall tell them —but gently and not passionately—to mind their own business, until I have your permission to explain matters; for a day will come—I feel sure of it—when you will not be ashamed of acknowledging me as your disciple; a day when my father will ask me, in his solemn way, 'What has snatched you like a brand from the burning?' and I shall reply to him in his own language, 'Grace.'"

"Lord Cheribert," replied the girl, with dignity, "if it were any one but yourself who was thus speaking to me, I should say that it was impossible that what you express so lightly could be seriously intended."

"It's my unfortunate way of speaking," interposed the young man,

humbly. "I am—that is, I used to be—frivolity itself, I know; but it's only manner."

"I am aware of it. I also feel that it would be quite inconsistent with your nature to give any one, designedly, a moment's pain. It would give *me* pain—very great distress of mind, Lord Cheribert—to discuss the matter which you have so unexpectedly forced upon my attention."

"Forced? Good heavens!" A look of unutterable sorrow crossed the young man's face.

"Forgive me! I was unnecessarily harsh. I wanted to stop you. The thought of your father—since you have mentioned him—ought, in my opinion, to have kept you silent. I know little of the world's ways; but, setting all other objections, even more important, though not less grave, aside, can it be imagined for a moment that your father would approve of what you have just been saying?"

"My father!" he exclaimed, contemptuously. "What can he give me in place of you that I should consult his wishes? What has he ever done for me that can be matched with what *you* have done? What is he in my eyes as compared with you? Nothing, and less than nothing."

"You ought to be ashamed to say so, Lord Cheribert," she answered, indignantly. "*My* father is dead, yet his memory is a more sacred thing than any living man can give me. You talk of reformation, but it seems to me that reformation, like charity, should begin at home."

"You are right, Grace; you are always right," returned the young man, with an air of quiet conviction. "I will be dutiful to him, because you tell me it is my duty, and therefore it must be so. His consent shall be obtained, at whatever price. My pride shall bend its neck, and he shall put his foot upon it."

"But that is only one thing, Lord Cheribert, and not the greatest thing, that puts a barrier between you and me."

She spoke with firmness, even with vigor; but at the same time she recognized her mistake in having permitted herself, even for a moment, to be drawn into a discussion of details. The determination in his face, which had suddenly become cold and calm, as though it had been hewn in marble, appalled her.

"That I can easily believe, dear Grace," he answered, gently. "No one can expect to get to heaven express and without stoppages. If you will be kind enough to mention your objections, I will tick them off on my fingers—or, if you will permit me, what will be far

better, on yours—and answer them, one after another, as well as I can."

It was very difficult to deal with such a lover; passionate as Rousseau, resolute as Wellington, but in manner a *farceur*. It was as natural to Lord Cheribert to be droll in the most serious situations as for a dull man to be serious in a droll one. Like a planet (which was also, alas! a falling-star), he dwelt in an atmosphere of his own, which, while by no means one of mere persiflage, was of exceeding levity.

"I will mention one obstacle to your suit, since you compel me to do so," answered Grace, gravely, "which, I am sure you will agree with me, can leave no more to be said. I am deeply touched by the honor you have done me, and I shall never cease to be your friend and well-wisher—but I do not love you, Lord Cheribert."

He bit his lip and turned a little pale, then smiled again as pleasantly as ever.

"It would be quite beyond my utmost expectations if you did, dear Grace," he answered, gently; "but I have—as regards yourself at least—a plentiful stock of patience, and an immense reserve of what our friends call obstinacy and ourselves resolution. You shall teach me everything else, and I will teach you to love me."

"It is impossible, my lord; I shall never learn that lesson."

He looked at her for a moment in silence; the dog came barking from the wood, and ran to its mistress, who took it up in her arms. For the first time Lord Cheribert's pleasant face was clouded with a frown.

"Perhaps," he said, "you have learned it already from some other teacher? That is a question which, if you could read my heart, you would not refuse to answer; my *life* hangs on it."

She buried her face in that of her little favorite to hide the flush that overspread her cheeks.

"I must have your 'yes' or 'no,' Grace," he continued, with tender earnestness. "Are you engaged to another man?"

She looked up at him haughtily, almost defiantly.

"No, I am not, my lord; but that can make no difference."

The young man uttered a sigh of relief, then broke into a laugh full of joyful music. "Oh, but indeed it does," he said; "if you did but know how happy that reply has made me, you would never have the heart to take such happiness away. Do not spoil it by another word. I ask for nothing more—just now. You see how easily I am satisfied—which is a great recommendation in a husband."

"My Lord—"

"There now, I have angered you. Forgive me. Rip, you rascal, of whom I feel so jealous, ask your dear mistress to forgive me. It is the very last peccadillo of a lifetime. Let us change the subject and talk of something else. Which do you like best, Miss Grace, the river or the mountain, Elm Place or the Fells? Your sisters—and here they come with Roscoe the Inseparable—have recommended me to try the fishing in Halswater. I shall shortly, therefore, have the pleasure of meeting you again."

"Believe me, Lord Cheribert, it will be useless," she answered, hastily, for the others were approaching them.

"I shall come if I am alive," he answered, quietly. "Miss Tremenhere, what a view you have here! I cannot believe, for all you tell me, that your Cumberland home can show a finer."

"I hope you will come, then, and judge for yourself, as you have half promised to do, Lord Cheribert," said Agnes, graciously.

"Half promised? Indeed I have whole promised," returned the young man, cheerfully. "There is nothing which I look forward to with greater pleasure. I know when I am well off (it's a long time since I *have* been well off, as Roscoe knows), and if I have the same good time at Halswater as I have had at Elm Place, I shall have reason, indeed, to congratulate myself."

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN LAKELAND.

THERE are two valleys in Lakeland, side by side, far removed from those which are familiar to its tourists, both of them beautiful, but with a beauty that owes little to verdure and less to foliage, each traversed by a rocky stream—in the one case by the Werdle, in the other by the Start—from which they take their names. In the Werdle Valley there is a farm or two, a road-side inn, and a vicarage, with a church in proportion to the value of the benefice, which it would be mockery indeed to call "a living"; in the Start Valley there are, where it is widest, but a few cottages, and where it narrows, and the huge fells begin to hem it in, there is no sign of human habitation; there are no cattle, nor sheep. The hill-fox and the foumart are to be found there, indeed, but only by those who

know where to look for them; the very birds that haunt those solitary walls of rock are few; the rock raven and the buzzard hover over them. Past Werle, and over the hill that separates it from its neighbor-valley, and up the Start Vale at its head, is the mountain road to Halswater. Many fair scenes and many fine ones are to be beheld by the pedestrian upon his way; but what will strike him most, not from its beauty, though it is very beautiful, but from the unexpectedness of finding it among such wild and grim surroundings, is the view of a country-house. Until eight hundred feet or so of the pass has been ascended, Nature in her wildest garb alone presents herself to him; but presently, through a cleft in a much loftier mountain range, his eye falls on a glint of blue, which is the foot of Halswater; and on its sterile verge, as if dropped there from the clouds, a mansion with lawns and gardens belted with noble trees, like an oasis in the desert. To find such an abode of luxury and ease cradled in crag and fell is startling, but there is nothing in its appearance that jars upon Nature's grandeur; time has so mellowed what art so well began that it seems no more out of place than any other of those ancestral English homes which seem part and parcel of the landscape they adorn. The wonder of the beholder is how it got there. To have dragged the materials for building it over the way he has come would have defied even Egyptian labor. Five hundred feet higher, and the secret is disclosed to him; yonder lies the ocean; and even where he stands the discordant shriek of the hawk will, in wild weather, not seldom mingle with the whine of the sea-gull. It was said in old times that only two dalesmen knew the road to Halswater Hall, but the sailor always knew it. It was he who brought the oak for its panelling, the marble for its mantles, and the pictures for its gallery.

With the sea half a dozen miles or so away for its background, the mansion looks even a more enviable dwelling-place than at the first glance. But, like more humble homes, it has not been able to close its doors against misfortunes; not only have Disease and Death visited it in their never-omitted rounds, but even War has found its way there. In Cromwell's time, indeed, its position was so remote that it is written its inmates and their neighbors knew not of the existence of the Great Protector till he and his work had passed away, but in the later Stuart days Faction, jealous of its peaceful solitude, and disguised in the garb of Loyalty, made it a nest of treason. Then the sea brought ships by night, and the ships brought men, and the standard of Rebellion was raised where yonder clump of

pines casts its shadows on the lake, and the mountain echoes learned for the first time the sound of the trumpet. Then Authority came and with relentless foot crushed Rebellion out, and set her torch to the fair dwelling—where the mark of it can still be seen—and wrote her name in blood in all the peaceful valleys so deeply that it took generations to efface it. But one thing it left alive—veiled Discontent: and though there was no more war, there was treason still, and the sea brought plotters from the north who lay *perdu* in the stately place, and priests who dwelt, like conies, in holes and corners of it, and once a fugitive, it is said, with a dark face but jovial mien, before whom Sir Eustace himself stood unbonneted, and who drank out of the only cup of silver the soldiers of the Hanoverian had left in the plate-room.

Then the ancient family in time died out, and though it could not be quite said that its memory had faded "from all the circle of the hills," its legends were giving place to gossip about the new-comers. A dozen years ago or so one Mr. Joseph Tremenhere, from London, an unknown, supposed to be connected with commercial pursuits, had bought the place and renewed its glories, but in the modern fashion. The domestics were almost as many as of yore, and far more gorgeously attired; new pleasure-boats and a steam-yacht were added to the house flotilla; the billiard-room was fitted up with gas-reflectors (a circumstance that set the very dale aflame); and it was even believed by some that ice was to be found on the dinner-table in the hottest summer day. Stories in this style of Eastern exaggeration were told of the Hall and its owner by the landlord of the Fisher's Welcome at the head of the lake, to amuse his guests when the wet weather, as it was wont to do in those parts, set in. Mr. Tremenhere had been a "good sort," it seemed, and thought no more of giving a guinea to a guide or a boatman than if it were a shilling; but he did not go to kirk, nor had he the excuse of belonging to the ancient faith as his predecessors at the Hall had done; for their chapel was now only used as a music-gallery. It was hazarded by some gentleman sportsman at the Welcome that Mr. Tremenhere might be a Jew—a pleasantry received with rapture, and one which in the neighborhood (where jokes were scarce) was often quoted to the general enjoyment.

As to the members of his family, Miss Tremenhere was thought to be rather calm and stately, which in the mistress of so great a household seemed pardonable enough; Miss Philippa to be good-natured and very civil; but Miss Grace, all were agreed, was the

flower of the flock. She had a good word for every one, and an open hand (with something in it) wherever it was needed. There was much less mystery about the new proprietor of the Hall than there had been about the old ones, but Mr. Edward Roscoe puzzled folks. He always accompanied his patron on his summer holiday, but without sharing his diversions: for fishing he had apparently as little taste as skill; there were a few grouse on the hills about the house, but they suffered no diminution in their numbers at his hands; he did not seem to be moved by that passion for the picturesque which brought some harmless lunatics to Halswater; no one, in short, could understand why Mr. Roscoe was a standing dish at his host's table. At first they took him for the bridegroom elect of one of the two elder Misses Tremenhere, but in course of years that illusion vanished. They then concluded he was Mr. Tremenhere's secretary, as indeed he was, and something more. If they could have guessed the real nature of his duties it would have astonished them exceedingly; for the owner of Halswater Hall had nothing in common with Josh of Lebanon Lodge, Kensington. He caught fish on his hook instead of men—the speckled trout and the scarlet char, in place of the nobility and the military—and placed them in stew-ponds to be devoured at leisure. He put the screw on none of his tenants, and therefore had no necessity of employing Mr. Roscoe's skill with that instrument; and yet that gentleman was somehow as unpopular as an Irish landlord's agent under the Plan of the Campaign. When the news came to his Northern home of Mr. Tremenhere's decease, the honest dalesmen were moved to sorrow, but found some mitigation of it in the reflection that now that they had lost the substance they would also lose the shadow that had dogged it; but in this they were fated to be mistaken.

When the three bereaved sisters arrived at the Hall, Mr. Roscoe arrived with them; only, instead of living under the same roof as of old, he was accommodated in a cottage in the grounds, which had been used by the old family, in the days of their hospitality, for overflow guests.

Matters were not so pleasant in the household as they had been at Elm Place. The presence of visitors had there had a restraining influence upon the two elder sisters, who, now that they were alone together, often said sharp things (in the sense of antagonism rather than cleverness, as Ajax was called *acerrimus* Ajax) to each other, and still sharper, in confidence, to Mr. Roscoe, *of* each other. That gentleman's position, though as general manager of so vast an estab-

lishment, and one in whom the most implicit trust was placed, it seemed to be enviable, had some crumpled rose-leaves about it, and even occasionally thorns. Each sister wanted the attention he paid to the other; but Agnes—which was curious, since she had usually more self-command—by far the more openly. She "could not understand why he gave himself the trouble to make such a fool of Philippa," which was her way of stating that he spoiled her; to which he would reply with his most winning smile, "It is for your sake," which always pacified her.

It must not be imagined, however, notwithstanding this tenderness of speech, that anything he said to her could be construed into a declaration of love; nor did Agnes complain of this reticence—not so much, perhaps, because she was old enough to know better as of a certain understanding which existed between them. With Philippa he was tender too, but in a less confidential way; and yet her too he contrived to keep in good temper. Mr. Edward Roscoe, indeed, deserved the name of a good manager even more than those who grudgingly enough bestowed it on him imagined; but no one knew what his success cost him. Moreover, with every day his position became more precarious, as is apt to be the case with those who have given "promises to pay" without the possession of assets. It is true that there was no date on the bill, but it had to be renewed, nevertheless, and the operation, though it had some likeness to a lovers' quarrel, was by no means the renewal of love. He was pressed, too, from without (though that need not be referred to at present) as well as from within, and was already in such straits as might have made some men desperate. But though Edward Roscoe had nothing of what we call faith, he believed in Edward Roscoe, and, like all men of his type, was confident that time and chance would somehow work together in favor of so deserving an object.

Much more apart from him than her sisters, but hardly more ignorant of the plans he was devising, and in which she too had her place, stood Grace Tremenhere. Indeed, she stood apart from her sisters also, though they still united in treating her, after their fashion, with tenderness. Of her at least they had no jealousy, and though to some degree she stood in their way, they did not visit that involuntary crime with their displeasure. In some respects, though their hopes rested on her having reached a marriageable age, they still considered her as a child, her presence softened their characters—long warped from what they might have been, and stunted by rivalry and discontent—and evoked what little remained

to them of fun and freshness. Unfortunately for her peace of mind, their humor—as always happens with women of coarse natures—took the form of raillery about her supposed admirers. When the post came (at an hour when it leaves places less out of the world) they would pretend to look at the superscription of her letters, and were perpetually asking her when Lord Cheribert was to make his appearance. "We told you, you know, that if he came we should know for certain what he came for, and his last words, as you remember, were that he intended to come."

It was a very unwelcome as well as threadbare jest, but it was difficult for her to put a stop to it, and it was at least some comfort that their assurance of his lordship's intention prevented them from harping upon a still more tender string. If they had ever entertained a suspicion about Walter Sinclair, it was clear they had dismissed it. But as regarded the girl herself, it was certain that she thought of that young gentleman a good deal more than when he had been their visitor. He was not, of course, her lover; unlike Lord Cheribert, he had never breathed a word of love to her; but what he had said—his few vague phrases of repressed admiration—were recalled to her mind much oftener than the other's passionate and determined words. The remembrance of the latter filled her with alarm, and even with repugnance. She feared his perseverance and importunity, which in that lonely spot, surrounded by those who, far from having sympathy with her resistance, would be ranged upon their side, would, she felt, be wellnigh intolerable. If she had but had Mr. Allerton to appeal to—for she had no idea that his influence had been thrown into the other scale—it would have been some comfort; but she was absolutely without adviser, save the secret whispers of her high-beating heart.

If Walter—that is, Mr. Walter Sinclair—should keep his promise of coming up to Halswater—but his doing so was doubtful; fool that she was to have discouraged him!—then, indeed; but even *that* was set with difficulties and embarrassments. Perhaps they might quarrel, and she be the unwilling cause; these two young men, one of whom she liked so much—at a distance—and the other whom she—she did not say she loved even to herself, but a blush, though none was there to see it, spoke for her.

One night, as the ladies were thinking of retiring, a sound of wheels upon the broad gravel sweep made itself heard in the drawing-room; for by coming a score of miles and more from the nearest station the house was now approachable by wheels, which in the

old time it had not been; then there was a peal at the front door bell.

"He has come at last," cried the elder sisters, in a breath, and both of them looked significantly at Grace.

"The idea of his coming here instead of to the inn!" exclaimed Agnes; "this is making himself at home, indeed. You must put him up in the cottage, Mr. Roscoe."

"You need not disturb yourself, Miss Agnes, nor need Miss Grace put on that heightened color," observed the gentleman appealed to. "I hear a voice which is certainly not that of Lord Cheribert."

"But who on earth can it be?" asked Agnes.

"Why, of course it's Mr. Roscoe's brother," observed Philippa.

"How do you know that?" inquired Agnes, with sudden vehemence.

"I don't know it, I only guess it," answered Philippa, with an uneasy look, "because, as you know, he has been expected for so long."

Then the door opened, and the butler announced Mr. Richard Roscoe.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MR. RICHARD.

The man who was thus ushered for the first time into the presence of the Tremenhere family would have been remarkable anywhere, but in that splendid drawing-room, surrounded by all the accessaries of wealth and luxury, his appearance was especially striking from its incongruity. He was dressed in what is known in the neighborhood of Ratcliff Highway as "slops," a suit of ready-made clothes that hung on his gaunt, spare limbs like the attire of a scarecrow. It was, or had been, a sailor's suit, but he had not the least resemblance to a sailor. He had long brown hair, and a beard so deeply tinged with gray that it did not seem to match it. Though at least six feet in height, he had not a superfluous ounce of flesh about him; he was emaciated and hollow-eyed, like one who had endured great hardships; to his brother, who had a robust frame, and was attired in faultless evening-dress, he presented the strongest contrast. They had absolutely nothing in common. There was something in the new-comer, however, which spoke of vanished strength, or at least of great powers of endurance; what could be

seen of his muscles stood out like whip-cord. His eyes were very expressive, wild as those of a hawk; perhaps at one time they might have been as fierce, but they had now a hunted look in them. A judge of physiognomy would have pronounced this man to have passed through some terrible experience.

The meeting between the brothers was friendly, but not cordial. The new-comer seemed to have some doubt of his welcome; while the other, despite his habitual self-command, was evidently embarrassed. His manner was nervous, and he spoke with a rapidity that was quite unusual to him.

"So, Richard, you are come at last," he said, as they shook hands. "I am glad to see you, and I think I may say as much for my kind friends here." And with that he introduced him to the sisters.

The visitor was evidently quite unaccustomed to society. As he took each lady by the hand he stared at her with unconcealed curiosity, and detained it in his grasp much longer than is common on a first acquaintance; upon Grace he stared with an undisguised, but by no means rude, admiration; it was like the natural admiration exhibited by the savage.

"You must excuse," he said, with an awkward smile, and in a hoarse voice, that spoke even more of ill-health than his wasted frame and the glitter of his eyes, "what you find amiss in my manners; I have not seen a lady for these ten years!"

"My brother Richard has been a backwoodsman," explained Mr. Roscoe, curtly.

"Well, scarcely that, Edward," he replied, dryly; "you are doubtless thinking of the wild man of the woods; I have been a hunter on the prairie."

Agnes exclaimed, "How interesting!" Philippa laughingly observed, "Like Leather-stocking." Grace regarded him in thoughtful silence; she remembered that Walter Sinclair had described his father as having followed that calling, and expressed his own admiration for it.

"There is not much to hunt here, Mr. Richard, I fear," continued Agnes, "except the hill-fox; but you are doubtless a fisherman, and we can promise you some sport in that way; and I dare say Grace, who is our mountaineer, will act as your guide over the hills. Anything we can do for Mr. Roscoe's brother will give us pleasure."

The new-comer looked up with gratified surprise.

"I wish your sister a better office, Miss Tremenhere, but I thank you kindly."

There was nothing of cringing or humility in his tone; but it was unmistakably one of astonishment at the nature of his welcome, as also of the surroundings. He seemed amazed at finding his own reflection in the mirrors (of which there were many in the drawing-room, for poor Josh's taste in ornamentation had been French and florid), and now and then cast furtive glances at the gilded ceiling, as though wondering how the gold had been made to stop on it.

"How long have you been in England, Mr. Richard?" inquired Agnes, presently.

"In London only forty-eight hours; I came straight up from Liverpool, and only remained in town just to buy these things;" and he looked down at his shop-suit with a painful sense of their inadequacy to the occasion.

"It was very good of you," continued Agnes, graciously, "to leave all the attractions of town to come down to us at once."

The new-comer looked embarrassed, and turned an inquiring glance towards his elder brother.

"I ventured to tell him that he would be welcome here," explained Mr. Roscoe; "and he was naturally, I hope, desirous to see me after the lapse of so many years."

"It could hardly be otherwise," observed Philippa.

"We are most pleased, I'm sure," chimed in Agnes; and Grace, too, smiled acquiescence.

All which was a proof, indeed, of Mr. Roscoe's influence with the family, for it is one thing to welcome one's friend, and quite another to welcome one's friend's friend.

With all the good-will in the world, however, to put their guest at his ease, the sisters found it a little difficult. There were, of course, excuses for him; he had not been used, as he himself had owned, to society; he knew nothing of his entertainers; after so long a separation, even his brother could have hardly seemed familiar to him; but all these pleas having been allowed, it was still felt by the two elder ladies that Mr. Richard Roscoe was a little awkward; perhaps he suffered by comparison with that complete self-possession and ease of manner which they could never sufficiently admire in his elder brother; Grace thought him only shy. She pitied him, because she understood that he was poor, and had suffered privations. Her interest was always attracted by such persons, just as natures of another kind are attracted by those who are rich and prosperous. Yet even she, too, experienced a certain sense of relief when Mr. Roscoe took his brother away to the supper that

had been prepared for him in the lodgings where he was to be bestowed.

The night was moonless and very dark. It would have been no easy matter even for one well acquainted with the grounds about the house to find his way to the cottage without damage to the flower-beds, if not to himself; but what seemed much more beautiful and striking to the stranger than any wonders of mere and fell that had met his eye that day, the whole garden was lit by gas-lamps. This, too, was owed to the taste of the departed Josh. The gas, of course, was made at home, or rather in a little wood apart from the house, which hid what was unsightly in the means of its manufacture; but the lamp-posts, very nicely gilded, had been imported from London. It was no wonder that Mr. Richard Roscoe opened his mouth as well as his eyes in astonishment at these artificial splendors.

"Well, I *am* darned! This beats all!" he murmured, with hushed amaze.

At which involuntary tribute of admiration Mr. Edward burst out laughing. It was not a pleasant laugh, which was not his fault, for he had scarcely any experience in laughing, but it was a genuine one. The astonishment of his relative at finding him in such very luxuriant clover tickled him, because it was a compliment to the intelligence which had placed him there; it was only himself who knew that his position was not quite so enviable as it appeared to be, and it gratified him to see it thus so fully recognized by one incapable of pretence or any stroke of diplomacy. It even pleased him to see the wonder with which this simple hunter of the prairies regarded the glass and silver upon the table laid for his entertainment, and the obsequiousness of the servant in attendance.

"If I had known of your arrival I would have got you something better for supper," observed Mr. Edward, slyly.

"Better! Why, I have not sat down to such a meal these five years."

The answer was a little beyond the other's expectation. "You need not wait, Thomas," he observed, curtly; "I will look after Mr. Richard myself."

It struck him a moment too late that it had been rather indiscreet in him to let the footman know that any brother of his had not been used to luxury from his cradle. He did not shut his eyes to the probability of the members of the Tremenhere household regarding him from quite another point of view than that of their

mistress or mistresses; and though he was not one to care much for the opinion of the servants' hall, he felt it was foolish to have given them a handle for gossip. Slight as had been the incident, it sufficed to put a stop to the late feelings of self-glorification in which he had permitted himself to indulge, and to replace him in his usual attitude of cold serenity.

"You have not brought much luggage with you, Dick, I noticed," he observed, lighting a cigar, while the other attacked the viands.

"And yet it looks more than it is," replied the other, frankly. "I did not dare bring down the things I came over in, so the portmanteau is half empty."

"The portmanteau! If you had only given me time, I would have seen that you had five portmanteaus."

"Then you would have had to send me the money to buy them. I am stone broke."

"I suppose so. Look here, Dick, you must never be without money in your pocket." He now unlocked a drawer, and taking out a handful of sovereigns, placed them beside his brother's plate.

The other colored to his forehead. "I was only joking," he said, with an air of annoyance, and even of distress. "I am not a schoolboy, that I should take a 'tip' like that."

"Take it as a loan, then. You will very likely have no need to spend it; but it will not do for you—or, if you prefer that way of putting it, for *me*—to be without ready money. Ten pounds, man—what do you suppose is ten pounds, or a hundred, or a thousand, for that matter, to a man in my position?—and I don't choose my brother to be penniless."

"That circumstance did not seem to distress you very much at one time," returned the other, dryly.

The reply was unexpected, and for a moment Mr. Edward's face looked very unlike that of a host—even a host at somebody else's expense; but the frown cleared away as quickly as it came.

"That's quite true," he answered, laughing, "but circumstances alter cases. If there was ever a time when we were like two beggars fighting for a crust, forget it. I have now, at all events, not only the will but the power to make you ample amends."

"I do not wish to live upon your bounty, Edward," was the cold rejoinder. The speaker's eyes were looking at the little heap of gold with marked disfavor.

"I wish I had given him a hundred," was the other's reflection; "it is merely avarice that takes this mask of pride."

"You gave me to understand that if I came over here I should find employment of some kind."

"So you shall, Dick. Do not fear that you will not be worth your wages." Then added to himself, "I do believe he is the same tomfool he ever was; and I'm another to have ever sent for him on the belief that he could have altered."

"But I should like to know what the employment is," persisted Richard. He had not the resolution of his brother, the dogged determination that can tire out all ordinary opposition, and almost reverse the adverse decrees of fate; but he was not without a strain of it, as the other knew. "When you wrote to me upon the matter, you spoke of it as being something well worth my while—or, as you expressed it, 'any man's while'—but you did not even hint at what it was."

"That is quite true, Dick; it was something that I could not set down in black and white."

"Then I won't do it. I have been in trouble once—thanks to you—and that is enough," was the vehement rejoinder. "It shall never happen again—of that you may take your oath, Edward; or, rather, I will take *my* oath, which is much surer."

"I forgive you your unbrotherly sentiments," answered the other, in tones the quiet calmness of which contrasted strangely with the other's passion; "the more so since I admit that there is some cause for them; but what I cannot understand is how a person of your intelligence can suppose me capable of making any proposition such as you hint at. You may say, of course, 'But you *have* done things of that kind;' to which I reply it is true that an individual of my name once did them—a wretched, penniless adventurer—but he has nothing whatever in common with the person who is now addressing you. You have seen with your own eyes what I am here—the confidence in which I am held by your hostesses, who are the mistresses of millions. Can you think me such a fool as to risk it by doing anything discreditable?"

"I am speaking of what you may want *me* to do," answered the other, to whom wine and good cheer seemed to have given both strength and spirit. "You have confessed just now that you could not set it down in black and white."

"How could I? It was a very delicate business, though one that was entirely free from illegality of any kind. Unhappily, your long delay has, I fear, caused the part I intended for you to be filled up by another. I can now promise you nothing so splendid; but there

is much work to be done, of part of which you can relieve me, in connection with the Tremenhere estate, which, for the present, at all events, will give you profitable occupation."

"Out-of-door work, of course, I could do—overlooking, and so forth—and I know something of grass-farming."

"Your talents will, I am sure, be most useful," said the other, dryly.

"Mr. Tremenhere, I suppose, made you his executor?" observed Richard, after a pause.

"Not a bit of it," answered the other, with a contemptuous smile. "I have made myself what you see I am; and you have not seen me at my best even yet," he added, with a sudden burst of pride.

"What! Thane of Cawdor that shall be King of Scotland! You mean to marry one of them, do you?"

"There are things more unlikely to happen in the world than that, Dick. To tell you the honest truth, I was at one time in hopes that you might have married the other."

"The other? You mean Miss Philippa, I suppose, since I can hardly flatter myself I could have captivated the young one."

"Well, yes, Miss Philippa, of course. But all that's over now."

"She's engaged, is she?"

"Well, in a manner, yes; but she doesn't like it talked about."

"And you are to marry Miss Agnes?"

"I never said so. I have no right to say so. I only said that there were things more unlikely to happen; and you must understand that even that was said in the strictest confidence. Come, it's getting late, and we are early risers at Halswater. How is your room? I hope you think it snug enough."

"Snug!" said Richard, rolling his hollow eyes about what was certainly a very handsome apartment. "I feel like Christopher Sly in the play."

"Or like Mr. Squeers in his Sunday clothes," replied Mr. Edward, laughing, "astonished at finding yourself so respectable."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AN INEXPLICABLE ALARM.

The most prudent and scheming folk cannot make provision for everything, and especially for what they may say or do themselves in a moment of impulse.

For many months Mr. Edward Roscoe had been in expectation of some such meeting as that which had just taken place between himself and his brother. A less confident man would perhaps have rehearsed his own part in it beforehand; but, though he was by no means one to trust to the inspiration of the moment, he had not dreamed of taking such a precaution. He had always been Richard's superior (and, to say truth, had treated him as if he was), and somewhat despised his intelligence. He had not made allowance for the independence of character which the knocking about in the world for years gives to a man who may have had but little of it to start with. He had expected to find him as clay to the hand of the potter, and he had found him rather stiff clay; he foresaw that he should have more trouble with him than he expected, and, on the whole, was sorry he had sent for him. He regretted now that he had given way to the temptation of boasting to him of his own position; his pride of place had caused him, he felt, to be unnecessarily confidential. It was foolish of him to admit, or rather to allow Richard to guess, that he had marriage with Agnes in his eye; for once, moved by impulses of which he was now rather ashamed, he had been both frank and truthful. He had really sent for his brother with the object he had mentioned, directly he had become aware of the contents of Mr. Tremenhere's will; but the wife he had designed for him was not Philippa, but Grace. At that time the latter had had no suitor, and it struck Mr. Edward that she could not do better than ally herself with one who would be under his own control, and with whom matters could be made easy. As he remembered Richard, he was a handsome young fellow, not without spirit, though always inclined to lean upon another, rather than trust to his own resources; somewhat sentimental in feeling, and also very impressionable to female beauty. Fortunately, since Lord Cheribert had

stepped into the vacant place, he no longer wanted his brother for this purpose—for, indeed, he now seemed quite unfitted for it. To his eyes he looked a broken man, worn out by fatigues and ill-health, which had also made him irritable and difficult to deal with. He had, it is true, suffered certain wrongs at his elder brother's hands; but that was long ago; and since Edward had shown a disposition to make amends, it was Richard's duty (as, indeed, he had hinted to him) to forget them, and make himself useful to his patron. In time, and with kind and judicious treatment, this would doubtless come about; and in that case it would not be a matter to be deplored that he had thus made a confidant of him, as respected his own matrimonial designs, from the first.

It would be of immense advantage to him to have at the Hall one whose interests were his own, for he was well aware that, with the exception of its two mistresses, there was no one at Halswater Hall on whose good-will he could rely. Though he had nothing to complain of from Grace herself, he felt that he could hardly count upon her personal regard as of old. Her intimate relations with Mr. Allerton, his declared enemy, forbade it. This was another reason why he was anxious to get her a husband as soon as possible who would remove her from the scene of his operations. If she had really any tenderness for Lord Cheribert, which he did not doubt, he was confident that, so far as she was concerned, the immense pecuniary loss which her marriage would cause her would weigh with her not a feather; nor from what he knew of Lord Cheribert did he think that, if even he was made conscious of that fact, it would seriously affect his intentions. The young man was reckless and headstrong, and had always been wont to please himself at any cost; his noble father, of course, would entertain the strongest objections to such a match without the gilding, but the young man's career had been one long opposition to the paternal wishes.

Mr. Allerton's views, if they were adverse, would be of much more consequence, since he enjoyed the confidence of both the young people; but in Mr. Allerton lay Mr. Roscoe's chief hope; it was, he believed, in the lawyer's power to set aside the conditions of Mr. Tremenhere's will, and if that were effected, he would be satisfied, though in a different manner from that which he now contemplated.

Unconscious of the large share she occupied in Mr. Roscoe's thoughts and having nothing in common with them, Grace Tremenhere recommenced her home life (for, in spite of the comparatively short time she resided there every year, she had always looked on

Halswater as *home*) much as she had been wont to pass it, though under changed conditions. There was no father now to saunter about the garden with his "little fairy," or to tempt to wander farther afield; his sedentary habits had hitherto often prevented her from taking the long walks over the fells in which her soul delighted, and which she undertook with perfect fearlessness. She knew her way, as her sisters said, "blindfold," and, indeed, so it almost seemed to their town-bred fancy; even in the hill-fogs, of which, however, she had had as yet no serious experience, she rarely lost her bearings, and had been termed in consequence by some chance visitor at the inn "the Maiden of the Mist." It was curious how much oftener than before her wanderings now took the direction of the inn—not the direct road which ran by the lake-side, but some mountain path, or mountain where there was no path, from which in the far distance the white-walled Welcome, set in its emerald dale, could be seen gleaming like a star.

The first snow had not yet fallen on the fells, but the mists were growing more frequent, and Autumn, though there were few leaves to show the mark of her "fiery finger," was coming on apace. The air was rich and heavy with the scent of it, and, though not unwholesome to those in health, already perilous to those of feeble lungs. The circumstance was not unwelcome to her, since it afforded her a good excuse for not becoming that mountain guide to their new visitor which her sisters had promised for her. Mr. Richard Roscoe was, for the present at all events, distinctly an invalid; he had a church-yard cough (as his brother humorously termed it), found mountain climbing much too laborious, and the damps of evening injurious. She was sorry for him, for he was of a roving nature, had spent the later years of his life more out-of-doors than in, and inaction was irksome to him; but just now the companionship of any one, and especially of a stranger, would have been very obnoxious to her. She preferred to think her own thoughts—vague, and often sad as they were—in the free air of the hills, to making polite conversation. It was her custom, after the occupations of the morning, which generally included visits to the sick in the neighboring hamlet, to dedicate the afternoon to Nature in a long ramble with the faithful Rip over the fells. In a few weeks more there would be no rambling of that kind; the hollows of the hills would be filled up with snow, and their summits cold and ice-bound; but in the mean time she enjoyed her mountain walks immensely. Though she was no poet, and the cataract could not be said to "haunt her like a

passion," she took great pleasure in the foaming becks, and the steep sheer precipices down which they plunged. Her eye was keen, her foot was sure, and fear was unknown to her. Not seldom had she found the sheep "crag fast," and told the shepherd of the danger of his missing charge. Such scenes, such pleasures, were a hundred times more grateful to her than the amusements and dissipations of the town. Her role of "heiress" was singularly unsuited to her, and but for the benefits which, thanks to Mr. Allerton, she was enabled vicariously to diffuse, it gave her no pleasure. All that she had seen and heard since her father's death of the effects of wealth had engendered contempt and dislike of it. It had been the cause of her sisters' disrespect to his memory, and, as she vaguely perceived, of their hostility to one another. Perhaps she had even a presentiment that it might one day prove an obstacle to the dearest though unconfessed desire of her soul.

Although Grace was glad to escape from the threatened companionship of Mr. Richard Roscoe in her walks, his society at times was far from displeasing to her; and indeed, though it could scarcely be called an acquisition, it had for the whole family at Halswater a certain sense of relief. His presence, as in the case of the former visitors at Elm Place, was a restraint upon the hostility with which the two elder sisters unhappily regarded each other, and which seemed to increase day by day. It afforded his brother opportunities of escape from their continuous appeals against each other. For Grace, too, at least Richard had also an attraction of his own. Independent of the obvious delicacy of his health that claimed her pity, there was a melancholy about him which bespoke her sympathy. She felt sure that some recollection of his past gave him acute mental pain, though he did his best to conceal it, and she had reason to suspect, from a word dropped now and again, that this was caused by the remembrance of another's sufferings. That he had suffered himself from severe privations he admitted, though he was very disinclined to dwell on them. "I have had a very hard life, Miss Grace," he once said to her, but it did not seem to her to have made a hard man of him. She had an instinct that under a rough exterior he carried a tender heart. When she had replied on that occasion, "And also, from what your brother tells me, a perilous life," he had answered "Yes," then added, with a painful smile, "You must not ask me to detail my adventures: they are nothing to boast of, and would only distress you to hear of them."

She had an idea that some one dear to him had undergone in his

company some shocking experience which it was painful to recall. Even what his brother knew of what he had gone through in his wild and wandering life, and which Edward was rather inclined to depreciate, as is the custom with men of his class (who have often perils enough, but quite of another kind than those of the traveller and the explorer), was sufficient to establish his courage; his very modesty upon the point corroborated it; and yet Richard Roscoe exhibited at times an utterly groundless trepidation. It did not need a medical training to understand that this was the consequence of some shock to the nerves. His sleep was disturbed by terrible dreams—a circumstance which it was impossible to conceal from the servants at the cottage. "Poor Richard is frightened by shadows," Mr. Roscoe used rather contemptuously to observe, "though, to do him justice, I believe, by nothing else."

Just now he was really too much of an invalid for much exertion, and it was difficult to believe, what was nevertheless the fact, that when in health he had possessed thews of steel and nerves of iron. On one occasion, however, it happened that a horse was brought for Mr. Roscoe to "trot out," for his own riding. The groom who led it up to the door warned him that in his opinion it was a nasty one, of a bad temper.

"Why do you say that?"

"Well, sir, he has thrown two men in the yard already."

"Then you had better try him yourself instead of me," suggested prudent Mr. Edward. The groom mounted, not very willingly, and after a second or two of "masterly inaction," the creature sprang into the air with its four legs brought together like those of a chamois on a crag, and cast the man over his head.

"A buck-jumper, by Jingo!" exclaimed the invalid, who, with the ladies, was watching this performance from the porch, and in three strides he was by the horse's side, and had vaulted on his back in a second.

It seemed almost like a miracle performed by a cripple; but still greater was the wonder of the beholders when, as the animal bucked again and again, with his head so low that he looked headless, they saw the rider maintain his seat as though he and his steed were one. In the end the man tired out the horse, who for the time was completely subjugated, and having descended from the saddle in safety, Mr. Richard fainted away. Among the out-door servants at the Hall he became from that moment, what his brother had never been to his *valet de chambre*, a hero; and, indeed, the feat made no slight

impression even on the ladies. Physically, it did him no good, since for days afterwards he felt the effects of it. One afternoon Grace sacrificed her walk, and took the invalid in her pony-carriage for a drive to the sea-side. For this act of kindness he was more than grateful, and as they drove along he became more confidential than he had hitherto permitted himself to be. He spoke of his aimless and broken life in a manner that touched Grace keenly, but with a conviction of its hopelessness that seemed to forbid a word of encouragement.

"I was never much," he said, in his queer fashion, "and could never have come to much; so after all it don't much matter."

About his brother's connection with his affairs he was reticent, but he owned that he was under a great obligation to him for having invited him to Halswater. Without it, he averred that he would have had no more chance of mixing with such society as he had found than of "getting to heaven"—a contingency he seemed to consider exceedingly remote. He never spoke of Walter Sinclair, and Grace did not venture to touch upon that subject; she shrank from exhibiting her interest in him to one who, from what Walter had said, had after all been his father's friend rather than his own. Once he let fall a congratulatory word about Lord Cheribert, but upon perceiving the subject to be unwelcome to his companion immediately dropped it; not, however, without a glance of pleased surprise, which afterwards recurred to her with significance. He seemed to her somehow to read her real feelings as regarded the young lord, and to express his satisfaction that he had not found favor in her sight; a circumstance probably due to what it was only too likely he had heard of Lord Cheribert's mode of life. Yet, if so, it was somewhat strange that Mr. Richard Roscoe, of all men with a past, should be masquerading as Mrs. Grundy. There were things, however, stranger than that about him, as she had presently cause to know.

The proposed limit of their drive was a certain little country town, in the environs of which there was a field in which, as it happened, a travelling circus had pitched its tent. As they neared it, certain sounds shrilled from within it, which overcame the concert of drums and trumpet without.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Richard Roscoe, "did you hear that?"

"I heard some one holloaing," replied Grace; "there is some equestrian performance going on; the people are cheering."

"No, no," replied her companion, at the same time, to her extreme astonishment, laying his hand upon the reins; "it is not that; it is something quite different. Would you oblige me by turning back? Pray, let us go home."

She assented, of course. The speaker's face was pale, and greatly agitated. The dew even stood out upon his forehead. For the moment she had feared for his reason; but directly the pony's head was turned the vehemence of her companion's manner disappeared. His expression of alarm and, as it had even seemed, of panic, was succeeded by one of exhaustion and distress; he lay back in the vehicle as one reclining in an invalid carriage. They drove a mile or more in total silence.

Then he said: "Miss Grace, you must think me out of my mind; it is only that something which occurred yonder awoke a very painful association. You have forgiven me for my foolish conduct, I know."

"There was nothing to forgive in it," she answered, mustering up a smile.

"It is kind of you to say so; but you are always kind. May I still further trespass upon your good-nature by asking you to say nothing of the—to you doubtless unaccountable—weakness of which I have been guilty?"

She promised silence, of course, and kept her promise; but it would have been contrary to human nature had not her curiosity been aroused by the incident. She took some pains to discover what sort of entertainment was then going about that part of the country; but all she gathered was that it was a circus, consisting of the usual performing steeds, a tribe of wild Indians (probably Irish), and "the champion huntress of the Rocky Mountains," a young lady scantily attired, for that inclement region, in tights.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE HILL-FOG.

For the next few days after his drive with Grace, Mr. Richard confined himself to the cottage, on the plea of indisposition, and Grace would perhaps have forgotten what she was nevertheless persuaded had been its cause but for a paragraph that happened to meet her eye in the county newspaper. It had the sensational head-

ing of "Mysterious Attack upon an Indian Chief," and described how one of the members of a travelling circus, taking a Sunday walk on the hill in the vicinity of the neighboring town, had been set upon and severely beaten by some unknown person.

Robbery could not have been the motive—indeed there was little beyond a blanket and feathers to steal; and it was the chief's opinion that nothing less than murder had been intended; he had thought himself lucky to save his scalp.

The paragraph escaped the attention of the other members of the family, and Grace forbore to refer to it, lest the mind of the invalid should be led to revert to a subject it was obviously better he should forget; and the incident made the less impression upon her because of certain circumstances which just now took place in connection with her own affairs. The Tremenhere ladies had not only not been brought up in the strict sect of the Pharisees (notwithstanding the terms of their father's will), but had been left very much to their own devices; they had read, for example, pretty much what they pleased, nor had any one ever dreamed of forbidding them the daily newspaper. At Halswater (where, however, they did not get it till the next day) it was eagerly perused by all of them as the link which united them to the outside world.

On a certain afternoon, when Grace took it up as usual in the library, where her sisters were sitting, she found that it was two days old.

"Where is yesterday's newspaper?" she inquired of Agnes.

"It has not come to-day, my darling," replied her sister.

Her tone, Grace thought, was unusually kind and tender.

"But indeed I saw Philippa with it," she answered.

"No, my dear," said Philippa, patting Grace's cheek with her hand—an unwonted mark of sisterly affection in her also—"that was the old copy. No newspaper came to-day; we shall doubtless get two to-morrow."

Mr. Roscoe, who had opened the post-bag according to custom, confirmed this statement; but, nevertheless, the missing paper never turned up.

The incident made little impression on Grace, but the increased affection in the manner of her sisters, which continued to be manifested to her, did not escape her attention. Even Mr. Edward, who was always paternal in his behavior to her, seemed to catch from them this epidemic of tenderness.

If there was an exception in the general domestic attitude towards

her, it was that of Mr. Richard. Since the time of their little adventure together he had seemed to shun her society, but now he appeared absolutely to shrink from it. There was nothing, indeed, of antagonism or dislike in his manner; on the contrary, it seemed rather to arise from an excess of modesty and the sense of his own unworthiness. He seldom spoke to her, but sometimes she caught his eyes fixed upon her with an earnestness that suggested a much closer study of her than she had dreamed of; but in this too there was nothing inquisitive or impertinent. The expression of his face, as that flush of recognition had shown it to her, was one of tenderness, but also of profound pity. It had nothing of selfishness about it, and yet she felt strangely disinclined to ask its explanation. Even with her sisters she maintained a strict reticence as respected their change of conduct; for it somehow came into her mind that the continued delay of Lord Cheribert to pay his promised visit was at the bottom of it.

Perhaps they had heard that he did not intend to come at all, and were keeping the news from her, under the mistaken idea that it would be a disappointment that would wring her very heartstrings. If so, this would explain Mr. Richard's sympathy, for, as she knew from his reference to him when they were driving together, he had been informed of her supposed attachment to the young lord. She was too sensible to resent it, since it was obvious that he meant well; but of course it was disagreeable.

What corroborated Grace's view of this matter was that she noticed more than once, on her entering the room where her sisters and Mr. Roscoe were sitting together, that her arrival caused them to suddenly break off their conversation and start some other topic. If her surmise was correct, this was only to be expected; but what did astonish her very much was that Mr. Richard was actually taken to task by his brother for not pursuing the same line of conduct adopted by the rest. This came to her knowledge by the merest accident.

She was in her boudoir one afternoon—writing a letter to Mrs. Lindon, who had sent her a pressing invitation to visit her at the sea-side—when the two brothers passed under her window. She loved the fresh air, even when it had the bite of winter in it; but this was not Mr. Roscoe's taste, and from seeing the window open he naturally concluded that she was out-of-doors. If he had thought otherwise, he would certainly not have said what he did say in her hearing. It was only a scrap of conversation as they went slowly by,

and she had no time to make her presence known to them before it was uttered and they had passed by.

"I think you are behaving very foolishly to the girl, Richard. Why can't you treat the matter as we do?"

"Because I can't feel as you do," was the quiet reply. "In place of her needing commiseration, I think she has had a fortunate escape."

"Still, for her own sake it would be only natural if you were to show a little sympathy, which some day she would be grateful for, and at all events it is the best way to recommend—" and then the voices died away as the sound of the steps upon the gravel grew faint.

That these words had reference to herself she had no doubt; but their meaning puzzled her. What *could* it matter to Mr. Roscoe that his brother showed no sympathy about a matter concerning which he had no personal knowledge, and what was it that a contrary course of conduct was likely to recommend to her? It never entered into her mind that she should be the centre of any scheme or plot; she had no apprehension of danger of any kind; she was conscious of having aroused no enmity, and indeed had just now rather to complain of an excess of affection than the want of it.

But she did feel the need of sympathy very much; nay, more, she suffered from a certain sense of isolation, which had of late grown more and more intolerable. She had never, it is true, had even a school friend; she had been brought up at home, and the home visitors, except perhaps Mrs. Lindon, had never been much more to her than acquaintances. Hitherto this lack of intimates had not troubled her, because she had had no secret to share with them. But now—now—oh, what would she not have given for some loving friend of her own sex to whom to confide the tender hope that lay hid in her heart, and the anxious fears that hemmed it round! Under no circumstances would she have confided it to either of her sisters, nor perhaps at any time, though in her father's lifetime she had not felt herself so much estranged from them, but least of all just now, when the very interest they manifested in her was probably caused by a total misconception of her feelings. She could give no explanation of it, but somehow or other the few words she had just heard fall from the lips of the two brothers intensified this feeling of isolation. It had been her intention, on sitting down to write to Mrs. Lindon, to decline that lady's invitation; her would-be hostess had always been kind to her, indeed, she would have

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been to her sisters had they not rejected her advances); but she felt she had little in common with her, and to pay visits when we are out of heart is a melancholy counterfeit of enjoyment indeed. But now even Mrs. Lindon's roof seemed preferable to that of home. For the present, however, she left the letter unfinished, and since it was still early in the afternoon, started at once for one of her walks over the fells. More than once Grace had found the mere exercise of lung and limb in the open air a tonic for the mind, and seldom had she felt the need of a tonic more than on the present occasion.

There would not be many more such walks for her that year, she knew. Early as it was, the autumn mists were already beginning to rise on Halswater. Upon the south side of it rose precipitous cliffs of friable stone, very apt at that season to descend in considerable volume, like miniature avalanches, into the lake, which made the narrow path that skirted its dark depths not a little dangerous. In clear weather this thin line could be traced to Dale End, the very extremity of the mere, where the Fisher's Welcome stood, with a handful of stone-built cottages about it, and the little church, which, but for its tower, might have passed for a cottage too; but now, less than half-way on its course, the path was lost in a fleecy veil, which was not the haze of distance.

More significant still, on the eastward horizon, as far as the eye could range, there was a patch of pure white, which a less experienced person might have taken for cloud; but Grace knew better. It was no cloud, but would endure for months and months to come, and spread and spread till all other peaks were like it—the first snow on the Skiddaw Range. Nearer at home there were other signs which a good daleswoman like herself could read. One of them, had she been inclined to nervous fears, might have made her pause. Though the afternoon was fine, and all the hills stood out as clear as though cut with the chisel, Blackscale, one of the outpost mountains which stand like sentinels on the sea-coast, was half hidden in mist. There is a local proverb,

> "When Blackscale has a cap,
> Halse Fell knows full well of that,"

the translation of which is that when the mist settles on one it will not be long before it finds the other. And Halse Fell was the very spot whither Grace was bound. It was the highest mountain in the neighborhood, though not nearly so much of a climb to Halswater folk, who were themselves very highly placed, as it would have been

to one starting from the sea-coast. Grace herself had often been to the top of it and back in a little over three hours. She did not now intend to scale its summit, though it looked very tempting, but, keeping pretty much to the level to which she had already attained, to circumnavigate it, and, striking over its neck, to descend by a well-known path into Dale End, and so home by the road. Though quite fearless, and confident in her own powers, she was not reckless, and much too wise to run the risk of being caught by a mist on the top of Halse Fell, a picturesque locality made up of precipice alternating with ravine.

Long before Grace reached the proposed turning-point of her journey the sunshine had given place to a gray gloom, which yet was not the garb of evening. The weather looked literally "dirty," though she was too little of a sailor, and too much of a gentlewoman, to call it so. Instead of running on ahead of his mistress and investigating the rocks for what Mr. Roscoe (who was cockney to the backbone, and prided himself on it) *would* call sweetmeats (meaning sweetmarts), Rip kept close to her skirts. Rip had never seen a mart, whether sweet or foul, but when on the hills he was always buoyed up by the hope of seeing, or at all events of smelling, one. Now, on the contrary, he seemed to be saying to himself, "No more hunting after these rock carrions. Would it were supper-time and all were well, and my mistress and I safe at home at Halswater!"

It was ridiculous to suppose that a town-bred dog should scent atmospheric dangers upon the mountains of Cumberland; but his spirits had certainly quitted him with inexplicable precipitancy, and every now and then he would give a short, impatient bark, which said as plainly as dog could speak, "Hurry up, unless you want to be up here all night, and perhaps longer."

This strange conduct of her little companion did not escape Grace's attention, and though she did not understand it, it caused her insensibly to quicken her steps. She had rounded Halse Fell, and was just about to leave it for the lower ground, when she suddenly found herself in darkness. The fell had not only put its cap on, it was drawn down over its white face as that other white cap, still more terrible to look upon, covers the features of the poor wretch about to be "turned off" on the gallows. The suddenness of the thing (for there is nothing so sudden as a hill-fog, except a sea-fog) gave it, for the moment, quite the air of a catastrophe. To be in cotton-wool is a phrase significant of superfluous comfort; and yet, curiously enough, it seemed to express better than any

other the situation in which Grace now found herself, in which there was no comfort at all. She seemed to be wrapped around in that garment which ladies call "a cloud"—only of a coarse texture and very wet. It was over her eyes and nose and mouth, and rendered everything invisible and deadened every sound.

She could just hear the piercing whine (with half the sharpness taken out of it) of the faithful dog at her feet, exclaiming, "Now the London fog has come at last, which he has felt in the air for the last ten minutes," and inquiring, "What are we to do now?" She didn't know any more than he did. What had happened was beyond her experience. She only knew from hearsay that there was one danger which cragsmen feared above all the rest except the snow-drift—namely, the hill-fog—and that here it was.

It might clear away in five minutes, and it might last all night. To move would be fatal. Should she take one unconscious turn to left or right, she was well aware that she would lose all her bearings; and yet, from a few feet lower than where she stood now, could she but have seen a hundred yards in front of her, she knew there would be comparative safety. She could no more see a hundred yards, or ten, or five, however, than she could see a hundred miles. Things might have been worse, of course. She might have been at the top of the fell instead of half-way down it. She had been in fogs herself, but not in one like this, nor so far from home. But matters were serious enough as they were.

Though there was no wind, of course the air had become very damp and chill. To keep her head clear, to husband her strength, should a chance of exerting it be given her, and to remain as warm as possible, were the best, and indeed the only, things to be done. Keeping her eyes straight before her, she sat down, and took Rip on her lap. But for its peril, the position was absurd enough; but it was really perilous. Lightly clad as she was, for the convenience of walking, she could hardly survive the consequences of such a night on the open fell.

Moreover, though she had plenty of courage, her previous experience of life unfitted her for such an ordeal. A native of the hills would not have been so depressed by the circumstances in which she had found herself so unexpectedly placed. To a townsman the want of arrangements for lighting the place at night seems always the most serious defect of the country—he misses his gas-lamps more than anything—but night on the mountains, without moon or star, with the sense of having been put in a bed with wet sheets added,

is a much more serious matter. The contrast her situation afforded to anything within her experience added vastly to its tragedy. An incident she had once read of a clerk in a Fleet Street bank being sent suddenly on pressing business into Wales, and all but perishing the very next night, through a sprained ankle, on a spur of Snowdon, came into her mind. How frightful the desolation of his position had seemed to him—its unaccustomed loneliness and weird surroundings, and the ever-present consciousness of being cut off from his fellows, in a world utterly unknown to him!

She was now enduring the self-same pangs.

CHAPTER XXX.

RIP FINDS A FRIEND.

As the time went by, each minute with the tardiness of an hour, and each decreasing, as she was well aware—for was it not bringing on the night?—her slender stock of hope, it seemed to her that had it not been for the presence of her little dumb companion she must even thus early have given up the fight. But Rip was more frightened even than his mistress, and shivered and moaned, and "snoozled" his cold nose in her thin cloak so piteously that the thought of having something to protect even more helpless than herself quickened her energies. The lookout, however—if such it could be called, where nothing was to be seen: her own hand held up before her was scarcely visible—was gloomy indeed. There had been times of late when, wretched in her isolation at home, and sickened with suspense and the unbroken silence of one she loved in secret, death had almost appeared welcome to her; but, as in the fable, now that he seemed to be drawing near to her, she shrank from the King of Terrors.

What would she have given now to be sitting by the fire in her boudoir, even though without much cheerful food for thought! The affection of her sisters might not be of a very genuine kind, but how truly would they pity her could they know of her melancholy position! Mr. Roscoe himself (though there was little "love lost" between them) would not be unmoved; and Mr. Richard, she was confident, would be something more than sympathetic. If Lord Cheribert could know, too, whether he had thought better of coming to Halswater or not, or, as the conduct of her relatives almost led

her to suspect, had altered his view in regard to her, what pangs of pity would he not suffer on her account! how furious he would be with Fate itself, that had so cruelly treated her! He would be as angry with the mountains, if she should perish among them, as King Xerxes. And, above all, what would Walter say? There was no reserve in her thoughts about him now; why should there be, when, in all probability, they were her last thoughts? She was saying good-bye to Walter though he knew it not, and nobody would ever know it.

She had closed her eyes, as people often do when their thoughts are very sad and deep, but opened them quickly as the dog gave a sharp, quick bark. She looked up, and lo! there was a small clear space in front of them; it was very limited, and bore the same sort of ratio to the blinding mist about them as the space swept for a few slides on a frozen lake where all else is covered with snow; but space there was, so that she could see her way down to the Col, the top of the pass that led to Dale End. She strove to rise to her feet, but it was very difficult; her limbs were stiff and numb to a degree that she had not suspected; it seemed to her that she was already half-way to death.

The dog had leaped from her arms and run forward, as if rejoicing at its new-found liberty, and she feebly tottered after it. With every step she felt strength and hope returning to her; a few more yards and she knew that, if her present course could only be maintained, safety, or what in comparison would be safety—and swift as the thought of it, the mist closed round her again like a curtain, and she dared not move one step. Her position was locally only a little better than it had been, and in one respect a hundred times worse, for she had lost her little companion. In vain she uttered his name in a tone of passionate entreaty such as she would have thought it impossible to use towards a dumb animal; it might even be that he did not recognize her voice, or, what was more likely, it could not pierce the wool-like atmosphere that hid her from even his sharp eyes. How idle were all those stories of canine instinct, when the poor animal was thus unable to rejoin her though separated by such a little space! That he already yearned to do so she was convinced; and notwithstanding her own miserable condition, she felt a tender pity for the little creature deprived of its human friend. It would, indeed, probably survive when she should have perished, but it would never forget its mistress, or find a new one to fill her place; she loved the dog not only for its own sake, but for another's.

It was amazing how the loss of this little link to the world of life increased her sense of loneliness and despair. After her late experience, she dared not sit down again, and, indeed, even yet she had not quite recovered the use of her limbs; she stood with her arms folded to keep warmth in them, and her eyes fixed before her, in feeble hope that some current of wind, as before, might lift the veil in front of her.

Then suddenly she heard the dog bark. The very sound was cheering to her, but the nature of the sound was infinitely more inspiriting; for notwithstanding the thickness of the atmosphere, which choked it and made it seem a far greater distance from her than the animal really was, she recognized in it an unmistakable note of joy. Rip had found something—perhaps even somebody—the meeting with which had transported him with pleasure. She knew Rip's bark too well to doubt it; and she could almost imagine the little creature jumping and bounding as it gave forth those notes of glee.

They were not only repeated, but continuous, and with an irresistible impulse she pushed through the wall of mist, which parted and closed like water behind the hand in their direction. She could see nothing, but they sounded nearer and nearer, and presently the dog himself sprang out of the fleecy veil in joyous welcome, and then sprang back again.

She followed, and presently the figure of a man loomed up before her.

"Good heavens, it *is* Miss Grace!" he cried.

She answered nothing; she had recognized him, but the shock of joy was too much for her overtaxed energies, and she fell fainting into Walter Sinclair's arms.

Was it night and a dream, she wondered, when, having presently come to herself, she found the man on whom her thoughts had dwelled so long and tenderly beside her in that desolate place. How *could* he have got there? Amazing, however, as was the circumstance, it was no time for asking questions. For the moment, indeed, her vocal powers seemed to have deserted her with all the rest. Walter, however, had a flask of sherry in his pocket, and administered to her some of its contents, with instantaneous effect. How strange it is that there are persons, otherwise in their right minds, who (because some people are drunkards) persuade themselves that under no possible circumstances can wine be beneficial to anybody! To this shivering and nerve-shaken girl it gave new

life, and instead of "stealing away her brains," recovered them for her.

She wasted no time in congratulations—not unconscious, perhaps, that there had been enough of them already, and warm ones, upon the gentleman's part; it had been so necessary, you see, to preserve her circulation—but showed her practical good-sense at once by the inquiry:

"You came up from Dale End, I suppose?"

"Yes; I was bound for the Star Valley, and on the Mare's Back here, as they call it, I believe, the fog caught me. As I had noticed there was a precipice on either side, I thought it best to stay where I was; I was getting a little tired of waiting when Rip found me. Now, as it seems to me, I could wait forever quite patiently."

Grace took no notice of this philosophic reflection.

"It is the most dangerous pass in the district—that is, to the stranger," she observed, "but to one who knows the bearings, if one could only find them—"

"I have a pocket-compass," he interrupted. "Happily (or I should not have found you), it was of no use to me, but perhaps you can make something of it."

It was much too dark for the face of the little instrument to be discerned, but Walter had some cigar-lights (there are some people, again, who say that smoking is pernicious, but they are quite mad), and by help of one Grace made out their position.

"We are facing due east, and must keep straight on," she said, with confidence.

"In that case you must let me go first," he answered, quietly, "for, without presuming to doubt your information, it seems to me, so far as I have been able to keep the direction in my mind, that will lead us over the left-hand precipice."

"No doubt," she replied, smiling; "and to turn back would lead us over the right-hand one. You have an admirable memory, but you are not a dalesman, Mr. Sinclair."

It was amazing how the speaker's spirits had come back to her. She spoke almost as if she were already out of her difficulties, whereas apparently all that had happened was a slight improvement in the position. It was as though the defenders of some beleaguered city had received an unexpected reinforcement, which was nevertheless much too weak to enable them to make a sally, so that they were beleaguered still.

"I am in your hands, of course," said Walter. This was not quite

a correct statement, for Grace was in *his* hands; or rather her hand was in one of his, while his other arm encircled her waist; it was so important, you see, that they should not get separated in the fog; even poor little Rip seemed to understand this, and stuck almost as close to them as they were to one another. "I will do exactly as you please; but it seems to me that we had better wait here, where we are pretty comfortable, till the fog lifts and shows us where we are going."

"Unless the wind rises the fog will not lift," said Grace. "At present there is still daylight somewhere, if we can only get to it."

"Eastward ho, then, with all my heart!" exclaimed Walter.

Then they moved forward very slowly, one foot at a time, like folks in the dark on a broad landing feeling for the stair. After a few steps they both nearly came to grief over a little cairn of stones.

"Thank Heaven, we have found it!" exclaimed Grace, delightedly.

"That heap of stones! You are thankful for small mercies," observed her companion, laughing, "for it almost tripped us up. And, by-the-bye, there are plenty more of them; I remember seeing thirty or forty of them at least, so pray be careful."

"These little cairns are landmarks," said Grace, earnestly. "I would rather have found one of them than a handful of diamonds. They are placed on this dangerous spot for the very purpose of assisting persons in the same plight as ourselves to find their way. With ordinary caution we ought now to get to Dale End in safety. Again I say, 'Thank Heaven!'"

"You must forgive me, dear Miss Grace, because selfishness is man's nature, for not echoing that sentiment," said Walter, softly. "I shall never be so happy in my life, I fear, as when we were lost upon the hills together."

"It was certainly fortunate for both of us that we found one another," observed Grace, with a provoking simplicity. "It would never have happened but for dear little Rip. How glad he was to see you! as, indeed, he ought to be."

"And not one-half so glad as I was to see him. I was thinking of you the very moment before I heard the dog's cheery bark."

"That is strange, indeed," said Grace, who omitted to add that within a few minutes of their meeting she herself had been thinking of *him*.

"And yet not so very strange," he continued, softly, "since I have thought of little else for the last three days, ever since I have been at Dale End."

"Three days!" she replied, in a tone of involuntary reproach. "And why did you not let us know at Halswater how near you were to us?"

There was a long silence; Grace could not see her companion's face, but she knew it was troubled by some grave emotion.

"I did not like," he answered presently, in a tone of profound sadness, "to visit, so soon at least, what I was well convinced would be a house of mourning."

"A house of mourning!" she repeated, wonderingly. "Nothing has happened, so far as I am aware of."

"What! Is it possible you do not know? Does it, then, fall to my lot, who would give my life to save you from a single sorrow, to be the bearer of such evil tidings?"

"Great heavens, do not keep me in suspense, Mr. Sinclair! Is there bad news?" Her voice trembled, her heart grew sick, as she remembered how she had suspected something was kept back from her at the Hall, and it was borne in upon her what that something must be. "Oh, do not tell me that anything has happened to Lord Cheribert!"

"Then I must hold my tongue," was the sad rejoinder.

"Is he—is he *dead?*" she gasped.

Walter Sinclair bowed his head, as though the man they spoke of lay beside them in his coffin.

"Yes; he was thrown from his horse in the steeple-chase and killed on the spot."

Grace burst into a passion of tears. "He said it would be his last race," she sobbed, "but how little did he think of it in *this* way! What a future seemed to lay before him! And how worthy he would have been of it! He had an honest and a noble heart."

Walter Sinclair removed his hat; he seemed to be listening to a eulogy delivered at the grave-side, to every word of which he was assenting.

"He had not an enemy in the world," she went on, unconscious of a listener, "but only those who knew him knew his worth. But for money—the having too much of it, and then the having too little of it, and the company among whom it threw him—he would have been a nobler and a better man. He lost his life through it. Dead, and so young! Good heavens, it is terrible!"

She was still sobbing; her frame was strangely agitated. It was no other motive than sheer fear of her falling that now caused Sinclair to place his arm around her.

She shook herself free of him with a sort of frantic energy.

"No!" she cried; "I will walk alone."

He was amazed, for she had not hitherto rejected similar assistance; he could not guess, of course, that she was rejecting it now out of respect for the dead man's memory. The young lord had loved her with his whole heart, she knew, though she had not returned his love; and just now, with the tidings of his death knelling in her ears, she would not wrong him by accepting another's love.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HAND IN HAND.

"SWIFT as thought," we say, and yet how little we picture to ourselves not only the immense rapidity with which it travels, but the amazing variety of the subjects with which it deals. In one instant we are communing with our Creator, in the next we are colloguing (an Irish term, but very appropriate) with the Enemy of Mankind. The Curse cuts short the Prayer, or (though not so frequently) *vice versâ*. In a flash we have reached heaven, and sounded the depths of hell. That every word which a man speaks shall one day be cast up against him is credible enough, but that every thought of our hearts shall be made known is a statement too tremendous for the human mind to grasp. If we knew what everybody else was thinking about we should probably hold very little communication with our fellow-creatures; they would be boycotted; we should say to ourselves: "We really cannot speak to such people. What a mercy it is we don't belong to them!" Even into a young girl's mind there intrude, I suppose, occasionally, strange thoughts, things which they had rather not—*much* rather not—utter. As for men, if any man says that he has never been frightened by his own thoughts, he is either a fool, who never thinks, or a liar.

Within the last half-hour the brain of Grace Tremenhere had been busier than it had ever been before within the same period of time. There had been occasions—on that of the fire in the theatre, for example, or that of the death of her father—when she had thought more deeply, and even more vividly; but the thoughts that had crowded into her mind of late had been more various as well as inthralling. They had, in truth, exhausted her almost as much as the physical trials she had undergone. She had looked Death in the

face, and said good-bye to Love and Life. And having found both again, she was dissatisfied with them, because the Friendship she had prized so much was now no more. It did not occur to her that if Lord Cheribert had lived, his pertinacity and perseverance, which she never could have rewarded as he wished, would have made both her and him very unhappy; she lamented his death, and the manner of it, beyond measure, chiefly because it had cut him off from the new and nobler course of life he had proposed to himself, but also, no doubt, because he had been her lover. Walter Sinclair, very unjustly, was now suffering from the misfortune that had befallen his rival; it seemed to Grace a disloyalty to the dead man, whose grave had but just closed over him, to let her heart go forth to meet that of the living man she loved, as it longed to do. Nevertheless, the patience and gentleness with which he bore her marked change of manner and her frigid silence presently moved her to pity. As they advanced cautiously from one cairn to another—for all was still wrapped in mist—she forced herself to talk to him a little.

"How strange, indeed, that we should have met here, and under such different circumstances from those under which we parted, Mr. Sinclair!"

An innocent observation enough; but it is one of the disadvantages of compulsory conversation that even the platitudes we use as soon as they have left our lips seem to have some embarrassing significance. Directly she had uttered the words she felt that they might be referred to moral and not material change, the latter of which was of course what she had had in her mind. She almost seemed to herself to have been saying, "At that time we did not understand one another, did we?" and felt the color, which fortunately he could not see, flame up in her cheek as she waited for his reply.

"The place is different, indeed," he answered, gently, "but as to the circumstances, alas! I see little change in them. What does it matter whether a river or a ravine separates a man from the place where he would be, when both are alike impassable?"

"I do not understand you," she murmured.

"It is like enough," was the quiet rejoinder. "My conduct now appears unintelligible even to myself. I see that it has angered you, and no wonder; you must have thought me mad."

"No." Even a monosyllable may have tenderness in it, but this had none. She would give him no encouragement—just now—but, on the other hand, she would not affect to misunderstand him; above

all, she would not repulse him as she had once done—a cruelty of which she had so bitterly repented.

"Then that must be owing to your kindness of heart," he continued, "which makes allowances for everybody. If you had known what I have gone through, it would, I venture to think, have not been so great an exercise of charity; but then you have not known. If I promise you that it will be the last time that I shall ever refer to it, and that to-day will be the last day that you will ever see me, may I tell it you, Miss Grace?"

"You may tell it me," she answered, softly.

"Then my excuse is, that from the first moment I ever saw you I loved you. When I remember who you are, and what I am, it seems the confession of a madman; but it is the truth. You must consider from whence I came—a place where all social gulfs that sever man from woman are passable, or can be bridged over; nor, indeed, was I at that time aware of the depth of that gulf, which then as now separates you from me; under the shelter of your roof I got to recognize it, though too late for my own peace of mind. You will bear me witness that when I took leave of you I dropped no hint of this. My admiration I could not conceal; but I hid my love in my breast, as the Spartan boy his fox. I never betrayed the torture it caused me. Like him, I was too proud to speak; for though, like my poor father before me, I have been a hunter, a fortune-hunter I could never be."

Grace was about to speak, but he stopped her with a gentle movement of his hand. "You were going to ask me, doubtless, 'But since you were so wisely resolved, why did you put yourself voluntarily in the way of temptation by coming up to Halswater?' I may honestly say that Mr. Allerton is partly to blame for this; he had heard of my intention to visit Cumberland, and pressed me to put it into execution, that he might have some information on which he could rely as to how matters were going on with you and yours. He had no suspicion of my own weakness. If I had told him of it, he would have said, kindly disposed though he is towards me, 'Do not set your affection on the moon, young man;' and he would have been quite right. Nevertheless, what also urged me to take this step was, I admit, my own mad folly; like the moth that seeks the flame in which it is doomed to shrivel, I could not resist the attraction of it. Nevertheless, I exercised some control over myself; when I said that I did not come to the Hall because of the sorrow in which I knew it would be plunged by reason of Lord Cheribert's death, it

was not the whole truth; prudence also held me back—a mere selfish prudence, which whispered that ill as it was to encourage an illusion, it would be worse to have it shattered by one before whom my whole soul bowed in reverence. Perhaps but for this chance interview I should never have seen you, for I was well aware of the danger of meeting you face to face; I knew that I might forget—the gulf that circumstances have fixed between us."

"Do you mean my money?"

She spoke coldly, even contemptuously; but there was an undercurrent in her tone that freed it from offence; he felt that the contempt was not for him.

"That is, of course, a very important matter."

"Not to me, Mr. Sinclair; nor, unless I have much mistaken your character, to you. As a matter of fact, however"—here she smiled a little—"the gulf you speak of is neither so deep nor so wide as you imagine. It is unnecessary to discuss the question, which would have no attraction for me; Mr. Allerton would have put you in possession of all such details had you asked him."

"Good heavens! but how could I ask him? Such an idea never crossed my mind; nor, if it had, should I have dared to utter it. What would he have thought of me? He has at present a better opinion of me than I deserve; but in that case he would have had a far worse one."

"I suppose so; I quite see your difficulty," she answered, serenely; "he would have taken a lawyer's view, and misunderstood you."

"And you do *not* misunderstand me?" he answered, with tender earnestness; "and you say the gulf is not so deep nor wide between us as I had imagined. Is it possible, dare I ask, is it possible that you would give me—no, lend me—your hand to help me across it? Or, if that is too much, would you mind saying that you are not angry with me?"

"I am certainly not angry with you, Mr. Sinclair."

"Nor even displeased that you have met me? That is all that I ask just now. It may seem a small thing to you—in that lies my hope—but it would be such a great thing to me. Are you not displeased?"

"I am not displeased with Rip for finding you; that is as much as you can expect me to say, I think," she answered, softly.

"It is more than I dared to hope for," he answered, rapturously. "What a good dog it is! what a *dear* dog!"

"He is not, however, exactly a St. Bernard," answered his mistress,

smiling; "the discovery of what we call in Lakeland 'the Smoored' is not, I think, the calling that best suits him. The poor little creature seems afraid of putting one paw before another, and sticks to my skirts like a leech."

"In my opinion that is another proof of his sagacity," observed her companion. "How can he do better than stop where he is?"

"At all events, it behooves *us* to do better," returned the young lady; she had fortunately recovered the use of her wits at the very time when the young gentleman seemed to have taken leave of his. "This is the last cairn, if I have counted rightly, and the mist is as thick as ever; but we have now only to keep on descending; there is nothing to break our necks between here and Dale End."

For the moment she had forgotten her late peril, and even the evil tidings that had so saddened her; her heart had found what it had so long sought for, though her tongue had not confessed it. The sunshine that was wanting without was resplendent within. Though their way was not slippery, at one place Walter was moved to hold out his hand to help her; she took it, and somehow it didn't seem worth while to let go of it till they reached the level ground; she might possibly have retained it even then, but the fog was no longer so thick, and it struck her that since objects began to be visible to them they might be visible to others.

CHAPTER XXXII.

NEW LIFE.

By the time they reached the "Angler's Rest" the sky had only the dull hue of an autumn evening, though the hills were hidden in impenetrable cloud, which Grace shuddered to think might have been her pall.

The landlord, Jack Atkinson, who came out to greet them, exclaimed, "'Tis lucky, miss, you were not taking your usual walk over the fells to-day." He took it for granted she had come by the road. She did not think it necessary to enlighten him on that point; there was gossip even at Dale End, and it would not have been pleasant to make her late adventure the food for it. It struck her, moreover, that her association with her present companion would have to be

accounted for. "Mr. Sinclair is an old friend of our family," she said, in as indifferent a tone as she could command. "I hope you are treating him well at the 'Rest,' Mr. Atkinson."

"Well, indeed, I hope so, miss; though I didn't know as he was a friend of the Hall folk." And he looked at Sinclair with some surprise. No doubt it seemed curious to him that his guest should have stayed at the inn so long without referring to that circumstance. Sinclair had no such misgivings, and was, indeed, not thinking of his host at all. Men in love are so reckless.

"You look white and tired, Miss Grace," said the landlord; "let me have the dog-cart out and take you home on wheels."

"A very good notion!" exclaimed Walter; "permit me to have the pleasure of driving you, Miss Tremenhere."

"Thank you, very much, Mr. Sinclair," said Grace, politely; "but I prefer to trust myself to Mr. Atkinson, if he will be so good. His horse is spirited, and the road a bad one, and he knows them both."

She flattered herself (as is generally the case when we do something disagreeable to another in hopes of some material benefit) that she had effected quite a master-stroke of policy; Atkinson would, she thought, perceive in this preference for his company how indifferent to her was that of Mr. Sinclair. Unhappily, the expression of Walter's face showed that he was very far from indifferent to this arrangement.

"Sorry to cut you out, sir," said the landlord, with a broad grin; "but the lady's commands must be obeyed," and off he went to fetch the cart.

"How could you be so cruel!" exclaimed Walter, with a melancholy sigh.

"How can you be so foolish!" returned Grace, with indignation —not, however, very genuine, for she already felt pity for his disappointment, as indeed she did for her own. "Do you wish to set all these people talking?"

"Oh, I see," interrupted the young man, with eager, if somewhat tardy, intelligence.

"Not that there is anything really to talk *about*," continued Grace (which made him all gloom again); "but country gossip is so easily excited. I shall tell my sisters, of course, that you are here, and under what circumstances I have met you. And I dare say your friend Mr. Roscoe will bring you an invitation from them to dine with us."

She could not resist that little dig about Mr. Roscoe, for whom he

had always shown a respect which she considered beyond that gentleman's deserts.

"I don't know whether I shall accept his invitation," answered Walter, with a smile that belied his words.

"Well, that is just as you please." The landlord now brought out the dog-cart, and Walter helped her into it. "His brother, Mr. Richard, whom you said was a friend of your father's, is now staying with us, which will doubtless be an attraction to you. *Au revoir*, Mr. Sinclair."

It was really an excellent piece of acting, but it was a mistake to use the French phrase, which the wily proprietor of the "Angler's Rest" at once set down as part of a secret code of signals established between the young people.

"Seems disappointed like, don't he, miss?" he observed, with confidential slyness, as they left her melancholy cavalier behind them; then, perceiving his remark was unappreciated, continued in a less personal vein: "Thinks he could have driven the horse hisself as well as I can, no doubt. Them Londoners has such a conceit of theirselves; not, however, as I reckon as Mr. Sinclair is a reg'lar Londoner, though he came from London."

"I believe not," said Grace, seeing a reply was evidently expected; "he is a friend of Mr. Roscoe's, who can doubtless tell you all about him."

"And that wouldn't be much, I reckon, neither," laughed the innkeeper. "He ain't much given to talk, ain't Mr. Roscoe. Got his brother with him at the Hall, I understand; looks poorly, don't he? And yet he has been a good sportsman in his time, I warrant; not like Mr. Edward."

Grace began to be sorry, for more reasons than one, that she had favored Mr. Atkinson at the expense of his rival. The man's tongue ran like a mill-wheel in flood time, and she trembled to think how it might run upon her own affairs as well as those of her belongings. There was nothing, she now felt, that could separate her from Walter; but she did not wish that matter to be taken for granted, or to reach the ears of her relatives by any outside channel. She had lived so much out of the world that the lively interest which the generality of mankind take in other people's affairs was unknown to her. Perhaps, too, she didn't make allowance for the fact that other people who live out of the world (as at Dale End) never lose an opportunity of hearing something of it from those they imagine to be possessed of the information. She thought it more dignified as well

as discreet to remain silent; but even that, as it turned out, afforded no security.

"Sad thing that about Lord Cheribert at the steeple-chase, the other day, was it not, miss?" continued her companion, after a short pause. He was really flattered by the preference the young lady had shown him (for he had an honest admiration for her), and thought it, perhaps, part of his duty (as, alas! so many other folks do) to "make conversation." "Mr. Sinclair told me as he knew something of him. Broke his neck in a moment, he did, and didn't suffer like young Harris, of the fell foot, as injured his spine—that is *some* comfort."

"It was a very, very shocking thing," murmured Grace, sick and shivering.

"Very much so; though, to be sure, if all tales are true, his lordship was a wild un. Run through half a dozen fortunes, they tell me, by help of the Jews—I mean money-lenders."

The last words were spoken in an apologetic tone, and the ruddy and weather-worn face of the honest publican as he uttered them became a lively purple. He was naturally loquacious, as an innkeeper should be, and, like the pitcher that goes often to the well, he sometimes got into trouble through it; but it seemed to him that he had never come to such utter grief as on the present occasion. It was only lately that some hint of the late owner of Halswater Hall having belonged to the Jewish persuasion had percolated to Dale End; but it had got there, somehow, and given a new life to its little community as a topic of conversation; in the kitchen of the "Angler's Rest" (for that humble hostlery had no bar-room), Mr. Atkinson had found it most agreeable and provocative of thirst; but that he should have made such a slip as to allude to Jews in the presence of Miss Grace—whom he pictured to himself as sensitive upon the matter as though, if her parent had been hung, she would have been to an allusion to a rope—filled him with remorse and horror.

Grace knew nothing of the cause, but hailed with gratitude the silence that fell upon her companion in consequence, and endured till they reached the Hall gates. Here she dismissed and recompensed him, and entered the long avenue that led to the house on foot. How different were her feelings from those with which she had left home a few hours before! What experiences had she since gone through! What fears, what sorrows, what delights! How changed, too, was her material position, for had she not found—never, never to be lost again—the beloved of her heart? Her isolation was over;

though the winter was about to fall on things without, with her "all was May from head to heel." The splendors of her home had hitherto had small attraction for her, but it now seemed a bower of delight. Her path in life would for the future be strewed with flowers.

It is well for us that, now and then, we should have such day-dreams, however sad may be the awakening from them. If we poor mortals could look into the future, the shadow of things to be would quench all our sunshine. If to Grace Tremenhere the events that were about to happen to her and hers could have been foretold as they were fabled to be of old, the gloom of evening that was now falling around her would have worn the darkness of midnight, and the evening moon would have risen above her as red as blood.

But to her mind's eye all that was not already peace was promise. The troubles of the past—for the moment even her sorrow for the dead—were forgotten. As her eye caught the figure of Mr. Richard coming down the avenue, it reminded her, indeed, of the conversation she had overheard before setting out on her walk between him and his brother, but without recalling the disagreeable sensations it had cost her; she knew no more of what it meant than before, but its mystery no longer troubled her. Love filled her heart and left no room for trouble.

Mr. Richard had been walking rapidly, but on catching sight of her came on more slowly, as though there was no longer need for haste.

"I am so glad to see you safe at home, Miss Grace," he said, with nervous eagerness; "the boatmen told me that the mist upon the hills was very thick, and I feared you had gone that way."

"I hope I have not alarmed my sisters," she returned, evasively.

"No, they knew nothing of it, and indeed I have been pacing up and down here to avoid their notice; I have been very much distressed indeed."

His countenance corroborated his words: it was pale and agitated with nervous twitchings, and his hollow eyes expressed the anxiety that had not yet quitted them.

"You are very kind," answered Grace, gently; "but here I am, you see, safe and sound. It strikes me that you are running some risk yourself, Mr. Richard, in being out so late in the dewy air after your recent illness."

"I! What does *that* signify?" he answered. His tone had a contemptuous bitterness which seemed to invite comment; but some instinct warned her to take no notice of it.

"You should take more care of yourself," she replied, quietly. "And as to fears on other people's account," she added, with a smile, "we should not give way to them. Even in our own case, how idle are often even our worst apprehensions, which nevertheless cause half the unhappiness of our lives!"

It was not always that Grace took such cheerful and sensible views of things, but just now she was looking at life through those windows which love paints rose-color.

"That is perhaps true," returned her companion, but with a deep-drawn sigh, and regarding her with a look of tenderest pity; "but how often, again, is our heart at its lightest on the eve of sorrow, as the bird sings its blithest unconscious that the hawk is hovering over it."

"That is what our Cumberland folk call being 'fey,'" answered Grace, with a forced smile; she knew to what the other was referring: the tidings of the death of her supposed lover, of which he of course imagined her to be still ignorant. She was certainly not called upon to enlighten him upon the point, but she felt reproved at her own momentary forgetfulness of the calamity which his words seemed to imply.

"I have some good news for you, Mr. Richard," she continued, eager to change the subject for another, even though it was not one she would otherwise have been willing to speak of with a comparative stranger; "Mr. Walter Sinclair, whose father was, I understand, one of your oldest friends, is staying at Dale End."

"Indeed! Walter Sinclair?" he replied, with interest. "I should greatly like to see him—indeed it is absolutely necessary that I should do so," he added, as if with an after-thought.

"Then nothing can be easier. He is already a friend of the family, you know, and especially of your brother."

This was another master-stroke of policy of our heroine's: let us not blame her for it, but only hope it will prove more successful than her last; it is only natural that the weaker sex should employ their little subtleties, which have, after all, nothing of hypocrisy about them. Her design was—though she had fairly made up her mind that no earthly power should keep her and Walter sundered—that Mr. Roscoe should himself be made to invite him to the cottage. Oh, joy!—but we must dissemble, for the present at least, for sister Agnes is standing at the front door awaiting us, unbonneted, but with a warm shawl thrown round her shoulders, for the air is chill.

"My dearest Grace, how late you are! We were getting to be quite anxious about you. I am told that there is quite a fog upon the fells."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

POOR DICK.

It was necessary, of course, that Grace should tell her sisters of her meeting with Walter Sinclair on the fells, and also of the sad tidings he had brought her. As it happened, though it would have shocked her to have foreseen any such effect in it, the latter communication greatly assisted her in the more delicate revelation she had to make to them concerning her relations with Walter, and indeed almost did away with the necessity of making it at all. The way in which she spoke of Lord Cheribert's death, though she did so with what was evidently the most genuine and heartfelt sorrow, yet convinced them they had been in error in supposing that she had loved him; while the manner in which she referred to Walter convinced them where her affections had been really placed. This was a satisfaction to both of them, for in their eyes Grace stood in the way of neither of them (whatever Mr. Roscoe might think to the contrary) as they did in that of one another, and they were really as fond of her as it was in their natures to be. They had the turn for match-making common to their sex, and now that Lord Cheribert was gone (though they would have greatly preferred him for a brother-in-law) they were well content (over and above the fact that it would be to their pecuniary advantage) that Walter Sinclair had found favor in their sister's eyes.

"Of course we will have him here," said Agnes, kindly, when the three ladies were alone together after dinner; "he might almost as well be in London as at Dale End; Mr. Roscoe shall invite him to the Cottage, where there is plenty of accommodation for another guest; and that, you know, will settle the matter, so there will be no more room for misunderstanding on anybody's part."

"There is no chance of any misunderstanding between Walter and myself," said Grace, rather dryly, and with a little flush.

"Which is as much as to say," observed Philippa, laughing, "that you two young people have arranged your own affairs together, and are quite independent of the interference of anybody; but nobody" —and here she patted Grace's cheek with her fan—"is going to inter-

fere, my dear; so you need not become a fretful porcupine all of a sudden and shoot your quills at us."

"I am sure that Mr. Roscoe, for one, will be certainly glad to hear of the matter," remarked Agnes, gravely.

"And so am I," put in Philippa, quickly; neither sister could ever confess her acquaintance with Mr. Roscoe's views and opinions without the other claiming to have an equal knowledge of them.

"He always liked Mr. Sinclair," continued Agnes, ignoring the interruption, "and the circumstance that his father was such a friend of the young man's father, though unimportant in itself, serves to knit the whole thing together very pleasantly."

In this, however, Agnes was not altogether correct, to judge by a conversation which was at that very moment going on in the smoking-room between the two brothers. Perhaps it was only by contrast with the good spirits of the rest, but Mr. Richard had been even more silent and gloomy than usual during the dinner, and had confined his conversation chiefly to monosyllables; and even under the consolation of tobacco he bore a very depressed and melancholy air.

"I am really very sorry for you, Dick," said his brother, in a sympathetic tone very unusual to him; "I am sorry to see you taking your disappointment so to heart; but you must see as plainly as I do that the advice I gave to you this morning was thrown away. Matters have taken quite a different turn—indeed we were going altogether upon false ground—and we shall now have to give the whole thing up." Richard groaned, and put his hand before his eyes, as if to shield them from the other's gaze. "Upon my life, I'm ashamed of you, Dick," the other went on, disdainfully, "that a man of your experience of life should take on so about a girl, as if there was only one in the world."

"There is only one in the world for me," returned Richard, passionately.

"Then you will be so good as to consider her *out* of the world," observed the other, peremptorily, "as dead as Cheribert; she is dead to you from this moment, and there's an end of it. I will just show you how the matter stands."

"It is unnecessary," replied Richard, in hoarse low tones.

"Never mind, I'll state the case, so that there shall be no more mistakes about it." He stood up with a huge cigar in his mouth and his back to the fire (as old Josh used to stand when he was setting *him* to rights), while his brother sucked at his pipe, with his eyes fixed on the carpet. "We must have the girl married to some-

body, and as soon as possible. When Cheribert broke his neck I thought there was a good chance for you, and, as you know, gave you my best advice how to take advantage of it. It would have been more agreeable to me, of course, that you should have had her than any one else; but it seems the young lady had already made her choice of a man that was alive and well." He put the last word in with a slight stress upon it, as though he would have said, "Not a fellow like you, with one leg in the grave." "That being so, your hope is gone; we—or I, if you prefer plain-speaking, and I don't see why there should be any concealment about the matter—cannot afford to wait any longer for the chapter of accidents, which, indeed, is much more likely to turn out against you than in your favor, and I mean to bring things to a head as soon as possible. Sinclair will be here to-morrow, under this very roof, and here he will stay until they are married. That is as sure as death. Come, be a reasonable man; you must surely know that you have not a shadow of a chance against him."

"I know it," answered the other, despairingly; "and if I *had* a chance I would not take it—not against *him*."

"Well, I care nothing about the sentimental aspects of the question; but I am glad, at all events, you have arrived at such a sensible conclusion."

"I have got a letter for him," went on Richard, gloomily, and like one speaking to himself rather than to another, "intrusted to my hands by his father only a few hours before he was murdered."

"Murdered, was he?" said Edward, with a little start and some show of interest. "How did that come about?"

"It is a shocking story, and I cannot tell it to you just now," replied the other, again placing his hands before his eyes, with a shudder, as though he would have shut out some terrible scene. "But when we parted he gave me a little packet for his son, which he said was of great importance."

"And what was in it?"

"It was sealed up; but if it had not been so, I should not have dreamed of prying into poor Sinclair's secrets. It was a sacred trust."

"Well, you've still got it, I suppose?"

"Yes, but not here. I did not like to carry it about with me in my wild and wandering life, but left it in safe custody with one on whom I could rely."

"In America?"

"Yes. I am ashamed to say that when I got your summons I

forgot all about the packet. Not, perhaps, that I should have sent for it in any case, since the lad whom it concerned was more likely to be there than here. But now, of course, I shall send for it at once."

"Quite right. But, if you will be guided by me, I would say nothing about it till it comes."

"Why not?" inquired Richard, looking up at his brother with a quick, suspicious glance.

"Well, if it happens to be lost, you see, it will be a great disappointment to him, for which he will naturally blame you. If he gets it, well and good; and if he does not get it, and if he does not know of it, it will not trouble him."

"I have already told Miss Grace that I have been intrusted with it."

"That is as good—or bad—as telling *him*," replied the other, sharply; "it is amazing to me how a man who knows that he is naturally indiscreet should not keep a better guard over his tongue."

"Or, before speaking, consult some shrewd adviser who has no interests of his own to serve," observed Richard, dryly.

"That, of course, would be better still," was the cool rejoinder.

"I think you must admit that the person to whom you refer has managed matters more successfully for you of late than you ever did for yourself."

"It seems so to you, no doubt; and yet I wish to Heaven that I had never accepted your invitation to come to Halswater."

"Do you? You prefer potted-beef to the flesh-pots of Egypt, and a tent-bed to a spring mattress, eh? It's a queer taste. Well, I am sorry I can't offer you a squaw and a wigwam; but you see it can't be done."

"You were giving me some advice about keeping guard upon my tongue just now, Edward," answered the other, hoarsely; "I would remind you to keep yours in check."

"Tut, tut, you flame up as quickly as a prairie-fire, Dick. It would be a bad thing for both of us—but much worse for you—if we were to quarrel. I was wrong to poke fun at you, of course; but once the thing was manifestly over and gone—done with—I thought you would not be so thin-skinned. It is absolutely necessary, however, my dear fellow, that you should understand it *is* done with. It will not do for you to remain here in the same house with this young couple, and let them perceive that you have a hankering to cut the bridegroom's throat. It is necessary that the course of true

love should, in this case, not only run smooth, but quickly and without distraction. If you have any doubt of your own self-command I will send you to some warm place—not to the devil, as some people would, but to the Isle of Wight or Torquay—for the recovery of your health, for a month or two; then, when they are married and settled, you could come back again."

"No, no," pleaded the other, passionately; "let me be with her as long as I can; it won't be long in any case. I give you my word of honor that neither of them shall ever guess—"

"Take a drop of brandy, Dick," said his brother, pouring him out a wineglassful, and looking at him, as he sat speechless and breathless, with genuine interest. The recollection had come into his mind of a somewhat similar scene with his old partner "Josh," to whom he had administered the same remedy. The parallel, however, was not complete; there was nothing the matter, in the case of his present patient, with the heart itself, but only that its emotion had overpowered him.

"Don't let us talk about this matter any more, my good fellow," he continued, soothingly; "your word is passed, and I can rely on you."

Grace's first act, on finding herself alone that night, was to finish her letter to Mrs. Lindon; its conclusion, it need scarcely be said, was different from that she had proposed to herself a few hours ago, and declined that lady's invitation to visit her. There would be a guest at home (though she did not give that as her excuse), whom she would not have left for many Mrs. Lindons.

Rip was always accustomed to sleep in his young mistress's boudoir, but on this occasion he changed his quarters; she took his wool-lined basket into her own room, and as he lay there hunting for sweetmarts in his dreams—and with quite as much chance of catching one as when awake—she sat far into the night regarding him with tender eyes, and thinking of him who had once saved her life at hazard of his own. But not of him alone. More than once the tenderness was dissolved in tears, and then it was not with Walter Sinclair that her thoughts were occupied, but with that other, who had also been her lover, and on whom cruel death had laid its sudden hand in his youth and strength. Never more would his blythe voice gladden human ear, nor his comeliness delight the eyes of all who beheld it! It is only a very few of us whose life affects "the gayety of nations," but it might be truly said of Lord Cheribert that into whatever company he came he had brought gayety with him. Moreover, to Grace

at least he had disclosed a heart tender and true, and capable of noble deeds (though, alas! they had never been accomplished), and of generous thoughts, which, let us hope, did not perish with him. What had become of them, she wondered, her mind straying into unaccustomed fields of thought—and of *him?*

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A WELCOME.

Even the next morning, when those dark thoughts of Death could probably have been swept away by the Light that was to bring love with it—for she knew that Walter was to be asked to the Hall that day—they were fated to still remain with her; for, before his arrival, she received a letter from Mr. Allerton, of which Lord Cheribert's death was the key-note.

"I have had no time to write to you of late, dear Grace, nor even the heart to write. I have, of course, been overwhelmed with business in connection with poor Lord Cheribert's affairs, but his loss itself is what has still more occupied it. If I had not been a witness to his poor father's misery, I might have written. I have grieved for the lad as if he had been my own son. I liked him exceedingly, and there was another reason, of which I cannot forbear to speak, why my sympathies were enlisted in his future: his heart was devoted to one whom I love even better. I have no reason to suppose that his attachment was returned—I hope *now* that it was not so—but I know that he was a great favorite of yours, and that you esteemed his noble nature, and perceived those great merits in him of which few persons, save you and me, were cognizant. I confess that I had looked forward to a time when you and he—But, alas! 'all these things have ceased to be,' and it is worse than useless to dwell upon them; but I know that there is at least one genuine mourner for him beside myself and his father. As regards the latter, his fate is an awful lesson to us to be patient with the erring, 'especially with those of our own household.' His wretchedness wrings my heart. I do not, however, write these lines, dear Grace, to make you sorrowful. I would rather remind you that it is not intended that any loss which Providence inflicts upon us should permanently sadden our lives, and least of all when, as in your case, they are but beginning."

It was a characteristic letter throughout; a curious blending of kindness and good-sense, of Christian teaching and the wisdom of this world. Grace read it with remorse, for though its expressions of regret came home to her every one, she was conscious of being in an altogether different frame of mind from that in which the writer expected to find her. How could it be otherwise, when she was about to meet the man of her choice, for the first time, in that acknowledged relation? She felt that she would be a hypocrite and a dissembler if she did not write that very day to enlighten the good lawyer as to the real state of the case.

Mr. Roscoe had been commissioned by Agnes to send a letter by hand to Dale End that morning, to invite Walter to exchange his quarters at the Angler's Rest for a lodging in the cottage, and that young gentleman did not take long in settling his very moderate bill and packing his portmanteau. There was a phrase in the letter which, though not remarkable for grace of expression, made him think more highly of the writer than he had hitherto done, though, as we know, he had always seemed more sensible of his merits than they deserved.

"We shall all be glad to see you again," he wrote, "and one of us (I think, between ourselves) particularly so." It was a little precipitating matters, perhaps, but Mr. Roscoe was personally interested in the dénouement of this idyll, and, as he expressed it to himself, was not going to let there be any shilly-shallying about it, so far as he was concerned.

It so happened that Grace took her walk by the lake-side that morning, and meeting the dog-cart with Mr. Atkinson and Walter in it, the former was directed to drive on to the Hall (which he did with his tongue in his cheek, and a world of cunning enjoyment in his eyes), and the latter got out and accompanied Grace home on foot: an equivalent in the way of public notice, as far as mine host of the Angler's Rest was concerned, to the publication of their banns in the parish church. The young couple, however, never wasted a thought on this—though public notice was just then the last thing they desired—but pursued their way with happy hearts and the most perfect, natural understanding.

"Agnes and Philippa have been both so kind," murmured the young lady, *apropos de bottes*, as it would have seemed to most ears.

"And I must say Roscoe has expressed himself in a very friendly way, my darling," returned Walter in the same dove-like tones, and without the slightest difficulty in detecting her meaning.

What a walk that was by the crisp and sparkling lake in the late autumn morning! For them it had no touch of winter, and in the dark and wintry days that fell upon them—but of whose advent they had no suspicion, for we are speaking not of the changes of the seasons, but of the cold and gloom that was fated to imbitter their near future—it recurred to their memories again and again with sad distinctness. There was no need for the one to woo or the other to be wooed; their hearts were wedded already. They were in paradise, and dreamed not of the flaming sword that was to drive them out of it. Their talk would not, perhaps, have been very interesting to the outsider, but to themselves every syllable was sweet as the honey of Hybla. When we are reading our own verses aloud, says a great poetess, "the chariot-wheels jar in the gates through which we drive them forth," and something of the sort takes place in love language; but the speakers are unconscious of it—nay, its very imperfections, the breaks and stops, the half-finished sentences (closed perhaps by a kiss), the wild and wandering vows that love, in its intoxication, dictates, seem eloquence itself to them.

As they now moved slowly homeward (not arm in arm, for somehow Walter's arm had strayed round Grace's waist) another couple watched them from an elevation of the road that intervened between them and the Hall. They were not outwardly so demonstrative in their attachment to one another, but to judge by their conversation, were, nevertheless, on very familiar terms.

"There come the two turtle-doves," observed Mr. Roscoe (for it was he and Philippa); "I am glad to see that they are billing and cooing already. If 'happy's the wooing that's not long a doing,' they will have something to be congratulated upon."

"I hope so, indeed," sighed Philippa, "though even then I don't see the end of our own trouble."

"It will be a very satisfactory event in itself, at all events," observed her companion.

"You mean in a pecuniary point of view, I suppose," returned Philippa, gloomily. "I sometimes wish that there was no such thing as money."

"If you add 'or the want of it,' I will agree with you," responded her companion, dryly. "But their marriage will do much for us, I hope. It will certainly be one of two obstacles removed from our path."

"But how far the lesser one," remarked Philippa, with such a deep-drawn sigh that it seemed almost like a groan of despair.

"That is true enough," he answered, with knitted brow; "but it is not you, remember, who suffer from Agnes, as I do. *You* are not pestered with her importunities and her impatience. She does not overwhelm *you* with her unwelcome attentions; indeed," he added, with his grimmest smile, "you seem of late to be more free from anything of the sort than ever."

"It may be a laughing matter to you, but not to me, Edward," she answered, angrily. "You don't know what a woman feels who is situated as I am; and it seems to me that you don't much care."

"Nay, nay, do not say that, my dear," he replied, in his most honeyed tone; "I feel for you very much."

"To see her coming between me and you," continued Philippa, vehemently, and without taking notice of this blandishment, "as though she had a right to do it, drives me half frantic; to have to set a guard all day upon lip and eye, lest word or glance should betray me to her, is not only irksome to me to the last degree, but humiliating. I give you fair warning that I can't stand it much longer."

She was looking straight before her, and did not see the scowl that darkened her companion's face; for an instant he wore the look of a demon; it vanished, however, as quickly as it came, and when he spoke it was in the same calm, persuasive voice—though with perhaps a little more firmness in it—that had served his turn so often.

"My dear Philippa, you seem to have forgotten that this annoyance, of which you not unnaturally complain, was foreseen by us from the first. You made up your mind, you said, to bear it. Under other circumstances we might even have had to bear it longer; I need hardly remind you how *that* necessity was put an end to."

"Great Heaven! how can you speak of it?" cried Philippa, with a low piteous cry. Her face had grown ghastly white to the very lips, and her eyes expressed an unspeakable horror. "You promised me you never, never would!"

"Pardon me, my dear, I had forgotten," he murmured, penitently; "I should not have done it."

But the while she hid her face in her hands and sobbed hysterically, the expression on his own was by no means one of penitence. It was, on the contrary, one of satisfaction, and could it have been translated into words would have run, "Now I have given her something to think about, which will prevent her dwelling upon these little inconveniences for some time to come." And indeed it seemed he had, for not a word more did she say concerning them, while the young couple drew nearer and nearer.

"Dry your eyes," whispered Mr. Roscoe, sharply and suddenly, "Agnes is following us."

This precaution Philippa had hitherto neglected to take. Perhaps she had concluded that there was no necessity for it, since Grace might naturally enough have ascribed her emotion (for Philippa, unlike her elder sister, was very emotional) to pleasure at seeing her with her lover; but she took it now, and, after pressing her handkerchief to her eyes, fluttered it in the wind, as though she had only taken it out in sign of pleasure to the happy pair.

Then she greeted Walter effusively. "So glad to see you again among us, Mr. Sinclair," and kissed Grace.

Then Agnes joined them with a smile on her face, but not without an expression on it also that betrayed the recent presence of a frown.

"I had hoped to be the first to bid you welcome to Halswater," she said, "but I perceive that I have been anticipated."

By whom was made clear enough by the angry glance she cast at Philippa.

Before that lady could make what would have probably been no very conciliatory rejoinder, Mr. Roscoe struck in,

"We happened to be walking this way," he observed, apologetically.

That use of the plural pronoun, associating, as it did, himself with Philippa, overcame the slight self-restraint that Agnes was putting upon herself. "I was not referring to you, Mr. Roscoe," she replied; "you are not the master of the Hall, and therefore not in a position to welcome any of its guests."

"You are extremely rude and very offensive, Agnes," exclaimed Philippa, furiously.

"Hush, hush!" said Mr. Roscoe, reprovingly; "you are wrong, Miss Philippa, to speak so to your sister, and Miss Agnes is perfectly right. I must have seemed to her, no doubt—though she was mistaken in so thinking—to have taken too much upon myself;" and he removed his hat and bowed to Agnes.

Her face was a spectacle; it was evident that she bitterly regretted having lost her temper, but that the presence of Philippa prevented her from acknowledging it. To have thus humiliated Mr. Roscoe was pain and grief to her, but she could not humiliate herself by saying so; she looked as though she could have bitten her tongue out. It was an unpleasant quarter of a minute for everybody.

Even Walter Sinclair felt that there were crumpled rose leaves—

not to say serpents—in the paradise he had pictured himself as being about to enter.

"It is beautiful weather for the end of October," he observed, with ludicrous inappositeness; but as any stick does to beat a dog with, so any remark in circumstances of painful embarrassment is seized upon and made use of as a way out of it.

The whole party began talking of autumn tints as though they were peripatetic landscape-painters, and had come down to illustrate the neighborhood.

But in one heart there was such a passion at work—wild rage and cruel hate, and wounded pride, and passionate desire to be even with the cause of his humiliation—that, if it could have been laid bare to the eyes of her companions, would have frozen the well-meant platitudes upon their lips with the horror of it.

"Philippa is right," muttered Edward Roscoe to himself, with a frightful oath, "this state of things shall not go on much longer."

CHAPTER XXXV.

AT LUNCH.

On arriving at the Hall, Mr. Roscoe at once took Walter to his quarters at the cottage; he made some excuse about wishing him to take choice of one of two bedrooms, but his real reason was to introduce him to Richard.

Since his brother had been fool enough (as he expressed it to himself) to fall over head and ears in love with the girl, he thought it dangerous that he should have his first meeting with her accepted swain in the young lady's presence; he had confidence in Richard's word, but not in his self-command. He almost feared that he might exhibit some sort of antagonism to the young fellow even as it was. It was, however, a groundless apprehension. So far from showing dislike or embarrassment, Richard received the newly arrived guest with an excess of friendliness.

"I am glad, indeed," he said, "to take the hand of your father's son; it is a pleasure to which I have long looked forward, but which I began to fear I was never again to experience."

"You knew him well, I know," returned Walter, with reciprocal warmth.

"He was the dearest friend I ever had," was the other's earnest

reply, "and the best." He scanned the young fellow from head to feet with curious interest. "I see a likeness in you, stronger than when last I saw you as a boy, and yet not a strong one. He might have been in youth what you are; but I only knew him in his later years. Not that he was an old man, far from it; nor bad fatigue and privation—though he had endured them to the uttermost—weakened his great strength."

"Yes, he was very strong; and also, as I have heard, a most extraordinary runner," said Walter.

"Yes, yes," answered the other, hastily; then added, as if to himself, "Great Heaven, this is horrible!" and sank into a chair, with stony eyes and bloodless face.

"My brother is not very well just now," observed Mr. Roscoe; "the least emotion excites him strongly. I warned you of this, you know, Richard," he continued, in an earnest, almost menacing tone.

"No, no, it is not *that*," answered Richard, vehemently. "It is something of which you know nothing, but which it behooves Walter Sinclair to know. Leave us alone together, Edward." Then, as his brother shook his head and frowned, he added, "it is about his father, and his ears alone must hear it."

"Then you can speak with him another time," said Edward, decisively; "it will utterly upset you to do so now. Besides, there is the luncheon-bell, and it would be bad manners to detain Mr. Sinclair from his hostess just after he has arrived. You know what a stickler she is about such matters."

Walter had already had an experience of it, and at once hastened to take Mr. Roscoe's view of the matter.

"Nothing will give me greater pleasure," he said to Richard, gently, "than to speak with you about my father; but, as your brother says, perhaps it will be better to wait for a more favorable opportunity."

Richard scarcely seemed to hear what the other was saying. "He would talk of you by the hour," he said, as if buried in reminiscence. "'My poor lad that I shall never see again,' he used to call you. And he never did—he never did." The speaker's chin fell forward on his breast, and he said no more.

"Come," said Mr. Roscoe, taking the young man by the arm, "let us leave my brother alone for a little. He is doing himself harm by all this talk." Then, as they walked away together, he told his companion how tender-hearted his brother was ("it runs in our family,"

he said, "but I have more self-restraint"), and how greatly attached he had been to Walter's father. "Nevertheless, my brother only knew him (as he told you) in his later years, during which, as I hear, you had no communication with your father."

"That is quite true," sighed the young man, "I never saw him, nor heard of him, after he started to hunt in the prairie, till I got tidings of his death. He was killed by the Indians."

"So I understand," said Mr. Roscoe, a little dryly for a member of such a tender-hearted family. "Yonder are the ladies waiting for us, and also for their luncheon. I have noticed that the fair sex do not mind how late their guests are for dinner, but are very particular about the mid-day meal. It is doubtless because they are always taking little sips and snacks in the afternoon, and have no real appetite for the other."

To look at Mr. Roscoe's smiling face, however, as it met those of his hostesses, you would have imagined he had just been passing a eulogium upon all womankind. Nor were they backward in reciprocating his apparent chivalry. Agnes dowered him with an especially gracious look, as if anxious to make amends for her late outbreak; Philippa smiled on him with satisfaction at the remembrance of that passage of arms, which she well knew, moreover, that he had not forgotten; and Grace was radiant, though it was true not so much on his account as on that of the guest he had brought with him.

"Where is Mr. Richard?" inquired Agnes, as they sat down to table.

And before even Mr. Roscoe's ready tongue could frame an excuse for his brother's absence, Mr. Richard himself made his appearance. Every trace of his recent emotion had disappeared. *His* face, too, was pleasant and smiling; though to an observant eye (and there was one upon him) his cheerfulness might have seemed a little feigned.

"I am glad to see you looking so much better, Mr. Richard," said Agnes; "now our little family circle is quite complete." She glanced at Mr. Roscoe for approval, for the word "family" had been put in to please him—partly as a compliment to himself and his brother, partly to carry out his views as respected Grace and Walter.

"It will certainly not be the fault of our hostess," that gentleman returned, earnestly, "if it is not a happy one, and all does not go as merrily as a marriage-bell."

If a certain lawyer had been there, who was acquainted with the

circumstances, he would probably have murmured to himself, "What an infernal scoundrel!" but that individual was not present, and all who were seemed to receive the observation in a proper spirit. Curiously enough, however, the conversation presently reverted to him.

"Have you seen Mr. Allerton lately?" inquired Philippa of Walter.

"Yes; I saw him just before my departure from town, and he charged me with many kind messages to you ladies, which, except as to their general purport, I am very much afraid I have forgotten."

"You had something else to think about, I dare say," said Agnes, with another conciliatory glance at Mr. Roscoe.

"Or perhaps it was jealousy," observed Philippa, with a sly look at Grace; "some people don't like to give tender messages to ladies which have been intrusted to them by others. Not that I feel the omission very poignantly on my own account," she added, "for my experience of Mr. Allerton is far from tender. In his character of trustee I find him very hard." Here she suddenly flushed up, and came to a full stop. Mr. Roscoe had (I grieve to say it of one generally so polite to ladies) given her a kick under the table.

"I cannot say that of him," remarked Agnes, coldly. "He always seems to me to exercise a very proper prudence."

Mr. Roscoe's face grew livid; Agnes, perhaps purposely, was looking elsewhere and did not perceive it. "You are a great friend of Mr. Allerton's, I believe, Mr. Sinclair," she continued.

"He has been very kind to me, at all events," responded the young man, warmly. "Indeed I owe him a great deal, for, thanks to his good offices, when my Cumberland holiday is over, a position has been offered me in a certain firm, better than one so inexperienced as myself could have hoped for."

"That is very good news," observed Mr. Roscoe; and he spoke as if he meant it, as indeed he did, for the tidings suited well with his own plans.

"But at present, Mr. Sinclair," put in Agnes, graciously, "you will have nothing to do, I trust, but to enjoy yourself."

She really liked the young fellow, but was also very desirous to efface from his mind the impression which her conduct of the morning had only too probably made upon it.

"Indeed, Miss Tremenhere, with the recollection of your late river home in my mind," he answered, gratefully, "I can imagine nothing but happiness under your roof."

Walter meant what he said, but his words to those present, and

who knew how life went on at Halswater, must have seemed, indeed, a strange stretch of fancy. There was a sudden silence, which he naturally attributed to another cause. "I do not forget, however," he continued with feeling, "that at Elm Place you had a guest whom we shall all miss here."

"Yes, poor Lord Cheribert," said Agnes; "how affable he was, was he not?" She was not generally so maladroit in her observations, but she was in a hurry to say something.

"So full of high spirits I should rather call him," observed Philippa, decisively. "One never remembered that he was a lord at all."

This was not quite true, as regarded herself; for indeed she had never forgotten the fact, which gave her an unreasonable pleasure, for a single instant; but to "wipe her sister's eye," as Mr. Roscoe called it, was a temptation she could never resist. Agnes bit her lip, angry with herself at her mistake, and furious with her reprover.

Unhappily, though he did not intend it, Mr. Roscoe's next observation followed Philippa's lead.

"Yes; one forgot his rank," he said, "in his attractive qualities; one called him 'Cheribert' from the first; he was a capital fellow all round; it was a pity, however, that his great fortune went to the dogs, or rather to the horses."

"Other people waste their money quite as foolishly," observed Agnes, dryly, "though not on the same follies."

Again came that livid look on Mr. Roscoe's face which had overspread it by the lake-side that morning. If ever an angry woman could be warned, it should have had a warning in it.

"For my part," said Grace, speaking for the first time, and with suppressed feeling, "I shall never think of Lord Cheribert's follies. He had many and great temptations to which others are not exposed. His faults were on the surface; few kinder, nay, even nobler hearts than his ever beat in a human breast."

"In that I must entirely agree with you," said Walter, earnestly; "and if he had lived he would have proved it."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

RICHARD'S STORY.

THERE was something—"there is always a something"—on Grace's mind, beside the happiness which wellnigh filled it, in the consciousness that it behooved her to write to Mr. Allerton to tell him of her engagement.

Her correspondence with him had been hitherto always of a pleasant kind, but she foresaw that what she had now to say would be far from pleasing to him. She liked the old lawyer very much—more perhaps than any one in the world with one exception—but she knew his weakness. He was liberal even to munificence with his own money; quite understood that the only true value of it lay in its power of doing good; but he set too great store upon it when it belonged to other people. Half his life had been passed in the endeavor to make men come by their own, or to prevent what was theirs falling into other hands. Money was a sacred trust with him. If she had understood Mr. Allerton's real opinion of her sisters, and especially of Mr. Roscoe, she would have pictured to herself a far more vehement opposition; but, even as it was, she knew that he would oppose her views. She did not fear that he would offer any personal objection—indeed, how *could* he, or for that matter could any one else?—but she felt that he would object to the pecuniary loss she would sustain by becoming Walter's wife. She had told Walter that the gulf between them was neither so wide nor so deep as he had imagined; and he had understood her, as she knew (and meant him so to understand it), in the literal sense of her words. She had in reality referred to her indifference to the disparity of fortune between them; what he had imagined her to convey was that that disparity was not so very great; he was probably unaware that through her marriage with him she would forfeit her claim to an immense fortune; that nothing, in fact, would remain to her but the money she had saved since her father's death—much of which had gone in charity—and the £10,000 he had left to her, let her marry whom she might. To what is called a chivalrous mind—but she knew it was not true chivalry; to a quix-

otic mind, then, such as she feared that of Walter to be, the knowledge of all this might be fatal to his hopes. She felt that the longer it was delayed the better: that every day they passed in each other's society would make him more and more her own, and render it more difficult for him to give her up. The wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove (or the love-bird) combined to prevent her communicating at present with Mr. Allerton, and she therefore forbore to do it. She had no fear of any one else telling him her secret. She was not so simple but that she perceived her sisters were very willing, for their own sakes, that she should marry Walter, and would certainly do nothing to obstruct it; and she blessed them for their greed.

In the mean time she had never been so happy.

> "Love took up the glass of Time and turned it in his glowing hands;
> Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands."

If dear papa could have only known her Walter and witnessed her happiness, was the only picture her imagination could form of an increase of bliss.

> "Many an evening by the waters (where, thank Heaven, were no ships)
> Did their spirits meet together at the touching of the lips."

The loneliness of Halswater made it an admirable locality for such proceedings, and Walter Sinclair was no laggard in love; never was an engaged young couple more completely left to their own devices than they were. Walter was a *persona grata* to every one, even including Richard Roscoe. They might have noticed, indeed (but they noticed nothing) that he avoided them, when together, with even a greater consideration than did the rest of the household, and that he shrank still more from meeting Grace alone; but he not only cultivated Walter's society, but showed a particular kindness for the young fellow.

It was many days, however, before he made that revelation he had promised him on their first acquaintance, respecting his connection with his father.

The three men had been smoking together at the cottage one night, as their custom was, after they had bidden good-night to the ladies, and Edward Roscoe, feeling tired, had gone to his own room. There had ensued a long silence between the two who remained—Walter's thoughts, as usual, being occupied with Grace, while the other, as he slowly expelled the smoke from his lips, regarded his

companion with earnest eyes, and an expression which it would have been difficult to analyze, for it was made up of various emotions, and some of them antagonistic to one another—tenderness, remorse, and jealousy.

"Walter, my lad," he presently said, in low, grave tones, "I hope we shall always be good friends, whatever happens."

"I hope so, indeed, Mr. Richard," replied the young fellow, with a natural surprise. "On my side, at least, it must always be so; not only on your own account, but because you were my father's friend. I trust there is no reason why you should look forward, on your part, to any alteration in your feelings towards myself."

"There will be no alteration; no," answered the other with a heavy sigh. "You will never do any harm to *me* more than you have already done."

"And that is none," returned Walter, with a light laugh, "so I think our friendship is secure."

He had not the least idea to what the other had alluded, but his strange remark had made little impression upon him; he was not easily impressed just now by observations made by any one, save one, and Richard had always seemed to him a queer fellow, who lived more in the past than the present, and who had a way of speaking not always quite to the purpose.

"Heaven grant that it may be so," continued his companion, with gentle earnestness, "but you, at all events, have something to forgive *me*, my lad; for, but for Richard Roscoe, your poor father would have been alive this moment."

"What! Did you kill him, then?" cried Walter, starting from his seat.

"*I* kill him—*I*, who was his dearest friend? No; though in one sense would that I had. From my hand he would have welcomed death rather than—" He broke off with a shudder, and the whispered words, "Ah, how can Heaven permit such things?"

Walter resumed his seat, and waited with patient anxiety for what might be coming. It was obviously useless to press his companion; the difficulty he found in making his communication at all was only too evident. His face was gray and bloodless, and a dew, as of death itself, had fallen on it.

"There are people, Walter," he commenced, slowly, after a long pause, "who will tell you that the American Indians are as other men, with the like feelings and emotions as ourselves, open to gratitude and moved by tenderness, and who can be influenced for good. I

have lived among them for years, and can only say that I have never seen such a one. Within my experience they have been all alike—treacherous, base, and heartless—and whenever the opportunity is offered of proving themselves so, incarnate fiends. They have many evil passions (as Heaven knows have we too), but one overmastering one, that of cruelty; a lust for barbarity more hellish than ever dwelt in a white man's breast. This they have not in war-time only, but at all times, and directed not necessarily against their enemies but against all the human race. Your father understood this thoroughly; before he became a hunter, you know, he was attached as a volunteer to a detachment of the United States army, and this, he told me, happened to a little drummer boy of his regiment who chanced to fall into the hands of the Apache Indians. He was but thirteen years old and a pretty boy, and he was given over to the tender mercies of the squaws. Everywhere else in the world, almost, such a captive would have excited pity in the breasts of women. *These* creatures did this: they stripped the child, tied him to a tree, and for four hours subjected him to every torture which their experience told them would not be fatal to him. Then they took pine knobs, and splitting them in small splinters, stuck them all over his little body, till (as a spectator, a Mexican half-breed, described it) he looked like a porcupine, and set fire to them. They yelled and danced at his screams of anguish till he slowly died."

"What a sickening tale!" exclaimed Walter, with marked disgust.

"No doubt," replied the other, dryly, "but if such things are so bad even to hear of, what must they be to endure? If Indians so use a harmless child, you may guess what they are capable of when their enemies are in their power; I say their enemies—though they treat helpless women even more devilishly than they treat men. However, it was an enemy of theirs with whom my story has to do."

"Did my father fall into the power of such fiends?" exclaimed Walter, excitedly.

"Listen. Your father and I were hunters of the plains for years together. He was a man of iron nerve and an excellent shot, but, so far as I know, he never took a human life unless his own was threatened. Many and many a time had we been attacked by these devils, and sent them howling to their hell; but we never sought them out, nor even pursued them. He was a quiet man, neither given to blood-thirstiness nor revenge. So was I at that time, Heaven knows. It is not so now." Then he paused, and poured himself out a glass of water; his hand trembled so violently that he could hardly carry

it to his lips. "I cannot speak of these things as I would wish to do," he murmured, apologetically; "there is a fever in my heart and in my brain. They make me mad. Yes; he spared many that he might have slain, though he well understood their natures. We were well armed, of course. One night, as we were putting by our revolvers, I noticed he had a pistol in his breast-pocket. 'What is that for?' I asked. 'It is for myself,' he answered, gravely; 'if the worst should come to the worst, I will never fall into Indian hands alive. I know them,' he added, significantly.

"We had had a good season and were returning to the settlement; we had left the prairie behind us when it became necessary one evening to cross a river. It was in flood and dangerous, but the Sioux were about us, we knew, and there was better and safer camping ground on the other side of it. We rode our horses at the stream, but it proved too strong for us. There were rocks, too, in the river, and against one of these I was dashed by the current and unhorsed. The animal was carried down the stream, and I myself reached the bank with difficulty; I was much bruised, and had sprained my ankle. Your father, with great exertion, brought his horse safe to land, but, like myself, at the sacrifice of his weapons; our rifles and revolvers were lost; he had nothing but his pistol. Our situation was desperate indeed, for we felt only too certain that we had been watched by the Sioux. Had we had our arms we should not have feared them, for they had had experience of their accuracy, and relied on opportunity alone for destroying us. Worthless though they be, these wretches never throw their own lives away. If we had had even our horses we could have escaped from them; but we had but one horse. *That* they knew, but not that we were defenceless; so that for the night we were left in peace, but not to rest. I sometimes think, if we could have got rest that night, two lives might have been saved instead of one. The fatigue exhausted our strength. At the dawn of day we saw the Sioux; they had crossed the river, doubtless at some ford, and were coming towards us—some fifty mounted men. One held out a branch of a tree in token of amity. Your father smiled a bitter smile as he saw it. 'They must think us in straits indeed,' he said, 'to suppose us willing to trust to their good faith.' Then, turning to me: 'There is not a moment to be lost, Richard. You are lame and cannot run a yard. You must take my horse and ride for Railton' (the nearest fort).

"'What! and leave you to the tender mercies of these hell-hounds?' I answered.

"'Not so,' he said; 'I have my pistol, remember; it is but death at the worst. Moreover, by taking to the scrub yonder, I hope to keep ahead of them all, and save my scalp. You, of course, must keep to the open. My horse is a better one than was ever crossed by a Sioux. If you reach home with a whole skin, you will come back and look for me.'

"'But you are throwing away your life for mine!' I cried.

"'Mount and ride, man. Every moment of delay is risking both our lives.' He helped me onto his horse—for I was so stiff as well as lame that I could hardly move—with his own hands, and off we started, he for the scrub and I for the open. That was the last I saw of your father—alive."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE STORY CONTINUED.

"WHY do you not go on?" inquired Walter, after a long silence, which his companion showed no disposition to break.

"There is a reason for it," answered the other, hoarsely; "it would spare both of us if I said no more. Nevertheless, you have a right to hear all—if you wish it."

Walter inclined his head; he felt too sick at heart to speak.

"Well, the good horse saved me from the Sioux, as he would have saved his master. They followed me for two days and then gave up the chase. On the third morning I reached the post, half-dead with hunger and fatigue; but in an hour I was in the saddle again, following my own tracks with five-and-twenty mounted volunteers. The fever of my soul sustained me. The thought of your father, and of what he had done for me, and of what might have happened to him, filled my veins with fire. I slept at times upon my horse, but the men who were with me never lost the trail. Since your father had been bound for the same post, and we did not meet with him, I felt only too sure that he had not escaped with life. The best that we could look for, as I was well convinced, was to find his dead body, with a pistol bullet in it. But, alas! that was not to be. We searched as well as we could—always, however, moving quickly—till we came upon the scrub which I had seen him enter. To look for him there would have taken too much time, and it would be easy to return to it. The Indians had retired across the river; we found the ford

and followed them." Here Richard Roscoe paused and wiped his face, on which a ghastly dew was gathering. "Shall I go on?" he murmured.

"Go on," answered Walter, in tones that no one who knew him would have recognized for his own; his voice was frozen with the horror that had seized his companion, though he was ignorant of what was to come.

"Three miles or so from the river we found what had once been a man, and your father. His head alone was above the earth; the rest of him they had buried standing. His poor limbs were bound with ropes. They had scalped him; they had cut off his lips, his eyelids, his nose and ears, and had left him then—still alive, as we afterwards discovered—to be driven mad by the hot sun beating on his head, and to be revived for fresh tortures by the cool air of the morning, hell only knows for how long."

Walter groaned.

"A hunter who heard of it from the fiends themselves says 'the warrior' who invented this torture was thought very highly of by the tribe. There were not many left, before we had done with them, to praise him. This hand, palsied as it looks, slew seven of them!"

"Let me take it," cried Walter, hoarsely. He took it and kissed it repeatedly.

"Yet, but for me, your father might have been alive, lad, and I should have suffered in his stead. Do you indeed forgive me?"

"Yes; if you had been in his place you would have done as he did."

"I hope so; I think so; but he *did* it. If I ever forget it, I shall deserve to fall into Indian hands. Do you wonder now why I hate Indians?"

"But the pistol?" groaned Walter, unable to entertain any abstract subject in the whirl and horror of his personal feelings. "Why did he not shoot himself?"

"I suppose the powder had got wet when he crossed the river. What are you doing, lad?"

The young man had passed quickly into his own room, and through the open door could be seen placing things in his portmanteau—a revolver was the first of them.

"I am going away. I leave to-morrow for America!"

Richard rose, went into the other room, and laid his hand upon his arm.

"No," he said, "that way madness lies; look at me and do not doubt it."

Walter looked up and beheld a face he did not know; pallid with hate, distorted with passion: a livid face—and also one in which, it was plain, reason had no longer a place.

"Do you suppose I have not done all that could be done?" shouted this apparition, and then laughed aloud. "Seven with my own hand, and six times as many more by those of my men. There is not one of them alive: not one, not one! Will you make war against a race with your single arm? Leave that to me. You are not a madman as I am. Can't you see it? Come, come," he continued, drawing his now unresisting companion back into the smoking-room, and speaking in less vehement tones. "You must keep your wits for other things, for you may need them. No. There has been mischief enough already done. Your father's torments have not been unavenged; the man for whom he sacrificed his life has had his sufferings too—and because of him. Above all things, never breathe one word to *her* about your father's death. Do you hear me?"

"Whom do you mean by *her?*"

"Why, Grace, of course; our Grace. It would distress her."

"Of course I shall never tell her."

"You think so now; but perhaps at some other time—in years to come. Swear to me you will never tell her how I took your father's horse and rode away from him, and left him to his doom. Swear it."

"I swear I never will."

"I am satisfied; you are your father's son, and he never lied to me. Now let us talk of something else."

The speaker's face had suddenly changed; the fire had fled from it, and also the remorse and pain; he looked like one exhausted even to the verge of death, but who, after a paroxysm of excitement, had returned to his right mind. The spectacle in some sort relieved his companion from the distress which the other's recital had caused him: was it possible, he wondered for the moment, whether the man was not a madman, and had imagined the whole hideous story? though he came to the conclusion that this was not the case, but rather that the recollection of so shocking an incident had affected his brain. The idea turned his thoughts into another channel. If the poor fellow should be subject, as he had himself confessed, to lose his reason, might he not prove dangerous to Grace? She was evidently a subject of regard to his disordered mind. His solicitude that she should not hear the story might be accounted for by the

part he had himself played, but what did he mean by that strange expression "our Grace?" It was a slight matter, but the least suspicion of danger, in connection with so dear a being, alarmed him. There had hitherto not been the slightest kink or hitch in the smooth course of their true-love, and he was the more inclined, on that account, to exaggerate the smallest obstacle to it.

It was with great dissatisfaction, therefore, that he heard his companion presently return to the subject which he had himself spoken of as closed.

"It may be necessary, my lad," said Richard, as if moved by an after-thought, "to speak of your father to you once again; but I see how the matter distresses you, as well it may, and I promise you it shall be for the last time."

"Indeed," returned the other, earnestly, "I do not wish to hear it. What has been told me is sufficient, and more than sufficient. You were quite right to tell it me, and I thank you for the confidence that has cost you so dearly; but since, as you have justly pointed out, retribution is out of my power to exact, I entreat you to be silent on the matter, which can only cause me more distress and pain."

"Poor lad," answered the other with gentle gravity; "perhaps it may not be necessary for me speak; let us hope it may not, for both our sakes. It is very late. Good-night; and may you have no such dreams as I have."

Walter had no dreams that night for he had no sleep. The fate of his father, and the possibility of danger to Grace—or, at the best, of great distress of mind, if she should come to hear of what had been confided to him, divided his waking thoughts. It is true that Richard had himself enjoined upon him silence on the subject; but what trust could be reposed in one so strange and excitable? it was even possible that he might tell the story to her with his own lips by way of penance for what he considered (though such an imputation was itself a proof of a disordered mind) his base behavior. On the whole, he decided to warn her of Richard, but in a way that should not arouse any serious apprehensions. The next day, therefore, he took an opportunity, while walking with her alone, of asking her how she liked her guest at the cottage.

"I like the poor fellow very much," she replied, frankly; "better, indeed, than his brother, though we have known him so much longer."

"Then why, since he has won your regard, my dear," he answered, smiling, "should he be called a poor fellow?"

"Well," returned Grace, with a little hesitation, "he is an invalid, you know. One cannot but pity one who, though so far from old age, has lost the activity and strength that he manifestly once possessed. As he once told me with his own lips, he is the mere wreck of his former self. You are not jealous, *are* you?" she added, slyly, "that Mr. Richard has given me his confidences?"

"Not at all," said Walter, with a laugh; which was, however, rather forced, for her reply had chimed in with his apprehensions; "but is there no other reason why you pity him?"

"Well, if you compel me to say so, I fear that the fatigues and privations he has endured have affected his mind as well as his body."

"But you don't fear him, I hope?" inquired Walter, anxiously.

"Certainly not; I believe he has a sincere regard for me. But there is no doubt that his manner is, at times, exceedingly eccentric."

"Yes; some subjects excite him in the strangest manner; he is not himself when he talks about them, and all allusion to them should be discouraged. I want you to be careful, my darling, about that—for his sake, of course."

"I will be very careful; but what are the subjects?"

"Well, there is one, for example, which, if he attempts to speak to you upon, I beg that you will decline to listen to him. Would you mind saying at once, and peremptorily, that it is distasteful to you?"

"I am quite sure that, if I even hinted at it being so, it would be dropped at once. Mr. Richard, despite some drawbacks patent to everybody, is at heart a gentleman, and moreover would, I am convinced, respect any wish of mine."

"Very good; then, don't let him talk to you about the American Indians."

"The American Indians!" echoed Grace with amazement.

"Yes; it seems ludicrous enough, of course, but he has, not without reason, a great detestation of them. He has doubtless suffered at their hands, but his views upon the subject are exaggerated, and between ourselves, by no means trustworthy. You must never be frightened by anything he tells you about them; but what will be much your safest way is to refuse to listen to him. When he gets upon that topic he is, in my opinion, not a responsible being. I hope I have not alarmed you, my darling," for Grace had turned rather pale; "there is no danger to be apprehended, of course, but I wish to save you from hearing what may be unpleasant, and which, at the same time, may be harmful to the poor man himself."

"I am not the least afraid, Walter," she answered, quietly, "and will take care to use the precaution you have recommended."

They went on to talk of other subjects, and Walter no doubt thought he had reason to congratulate himself on his skilful diplomacy. But his revelation had filled Grace's mind with recollections and suspicions of which he little guessed. She was under a promise to Richard, as we know, to be silent about his extraordinary behavior during their drive in the pony-carriage, but the cause of it was no longer inexplicable to her. The strange noise they had heard as they approached the circus was no doubt the warwhoop of the Indians, which had probably awakened some dreadful reminiscence in Richard Roscoe's mind. She recalled his look of horror, and, as she now understood it, of undying hate when it fell upon his ear. Another thing, too, occurred to her which moved her even more—the attempt which, if his story was to be believed, had been made upon the life of the Indian on the fells. Was it possible that Richard Roscoe was the person who had assaulted him? The man's account of the affair had been received with incredulity, from the total absence of motive for such a crime. But if what she had just heard was true, there *was* a motive, and one that could have actuated one individual only in that neighborhood, namely, Richard himself. She could not look upon him as a murderer, even in intent; her whole soul shrank from it; but the only alternative was irresistible, and filled her with vague alarms. On one point at least—and why not on others—their guest at the cottage was a madman.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A CHANGE OF FRONT.

In his various characters as friend of the family, confidential adviser, and major-domo, at Halswater, Mr. Edward Roscoe exercised a great many rights and privileges which no one ever thought of disputing, and among them was the unimportant but delicate office of opening the letter-bag, of which he kept the key. The post, as has been mentioned, came somewhat late in the day, so that instead of the family correspondence arriving as usual at breakfast-time, and being displayed in public, it was brought to Mr. Roscoe, generally alone in his private sitting-room at the time, and distributed subsequently with his own gracious hands. Heaven forbid we should hint

that he took any undue advantage of the circumstance, but it naturally happened that he knew who got letters, and also who sent them away. He knew, for example, that Grace had not yet written to Mr. Allerton since Walter's arrival, and secretly applauded her for that maidenly reticence. He had much correspondence of his own, too, which it was highly undesirable should be laid upon the breakfast-table, and altogether the arrangement was a very convenient one.

On a certain morning, when the bag had been brought to him as usual, and, as usual, before unlocking it, he had locked his door, among its contents was a letter from America, addressed to his brother. "So it's come at last, has it?" was his muttered observation, as he took the envelope in his hand and examined it attentively. "What on earth made the fool seal it?"

The observation seemed uncalled for, for though it is now unusual to seal letters, to do so is not a proof of folly; and in some instances indeed the contrary. There was a little kettle on his fire—for he was a man who liked his coffee hot, and at irregular hours—and he now looked at it with an expression of great irritation. The fact was the kettle was useful to him in opening gummed envelopes, but of no use at all in opening sealed ones. Was it worth while to take the impression of this particular seal—which only bore initials on it—before breaking it, or not? Considering it was only Richard's letter, a fellow who took no notice of such little matters, he thought it was not worth while; he would melt the wax, and, after possessing himself of the contents of the epistle, fasten it down again with a blank seal. It was a simple operation, and one to which he was well accustomed. He melted the seal and opened the envelope. It contained a short official note to his brother, just saying, "I forward you what you left with me," with a banker's name attached, and the enclosure. This latter was another envelope, also sealed, directed "To my dear son Walter, to be delivered into his own hands." "Not just yet, however," was Mr. Roscoe's grim remark, as he melted this second seal. Then he read the enclosure. The effect of its perusal was remarkable. What he said cannot be written, because it was an execration of extreme violence, uttered "not loud but deep," but what he did was to stamp upon the ground with impotent rage. His countenance was white with the white heat of fury, and the consciousness of baffled schemes. His eyes flashed fire. His first impulse was to burn the letter, but even as he held it over the glowing coals he hesitated, and at that moment he heard Miss Agnes's voice at the door of the cottage asking if the letters had come.

In an instant he had thrown it into his open desk, and locked the desk, and came out to her, smiling, with the open bag in his hand.

"There are no letters for you, Miss Agnes, and I, too, have been neglected by my correspondents; but there is one for Miss Grace—I fancy from Mr. Allerton."

The word "fancy" was a pretty touch, for the lawyer's hand was as familiar to him as his own, and many a letter from him had he read, though he had never been one of his correspondents. If he had read this one, which he had had no time to do, it would have given him less dissatisfaction than some others, which, indeed, had spoken of Mr. Edward Roscoe with more freedom than friendship.

Agnes held him in honeyed talk, as was her wont when she got him alone, and to see his eyes and his smile as they replied to her, one would have thought the lady very dear to him, and never have guessed the impatience which her presence evoked, and far less the passion that was consuming him, in which she had no part at all. At last he got rid of her and returned to his own room, a different man from him who had last entered it. An hour ago, though there was much to trouble him, and obstacles in his path that would have daunted a less determined spirit, the immediate matter which he had in hand had been going well and prosperously. It was only an initial difficulty in his far-reaching plans, it is true, but to find one impediment in course of removal had been a satisfaction to him; and lo! instead of its being swept away, it had assumed even greater proportions; and all the work he had had with it had now, under far less encouraging circumstances, to be done over again. In vain he pulled at his cigar, not for comfort (comfort even from the soothing weed was not for such as he) but for ideas—how to meet this unexpected blow, and especially how to turn it, as he had often done in the case of such disappointments, to his own profit. For nearly an hour he could find no way out of the maze of difficulty, and only confused himself in his efforts to find it; but at last he hit upon a plan. It was a dangerous, even a desperate one, and what was worst of all, required the connivance and assistance of others; but, having once grasped it, his hold on it grew more tenacious with every moment of possession. It is a characteristic of men of his class, fertile in schemes, sanguine of success, and confident in their own powers of persuasion, that nothing but total and complete failure can make them doubt of the practicability of their plans. What is also an attribute of theirs is promptness; not an hour, not a minute, do they waste in putting them into execution. Taking the fateful scroll (or

scrawl, for it was written in shaky and ill-formed characters, significant of a tumult of anxieties in the writer's mind) from the desk, he placed it carefully in his breast-pocket, and sought the presence of the very person from whom he had of late so gladly parted, Agnes Tremenhere.

Each of the elder sisters had, like Grace, her own boudoir, and there was no sort of difficulty—for he had often certain business of a private character to transact with both of them—in seeing his hostess alone. She received him even more cordially than usual, for his business was not always of a welcome character, and as he had had no letters from town that day she justly concluded that it was not on business that he came. It was soon made plain, however, that he had not come on pleasure.

"Agnes," he said, as soon as he had closed the door behind him, "a great misfortune has happened to us—or so, at least, it at first seemed to me. Before telling you how I propose to meet it, and even turn it to our advantage, I wish you to be informed exactly of its nature. Read *this*," and, without more words, he placed the missive that had been sent to his brother in her unfaltering hand.

When not moved by jealousy or wrong, Agnes Tremenhere was cold and calculating enough. Her disposition, indeed, though far gentler, was almost as practical as that of Mr. Roscoe himself, and of this he was well aware. He was convinced that, of the various persons with whom he was compelled to deal upon the present occasion, Agnes would be the least difficult to manage, and the most likely to fall in with his views. Nevertheless, it was with satisfaction that, as he watched her face attentively as she read, he saw it harden, after the first flush of surprise, and assume an expression of unswerving determination.

"You know what this means, of course, as regards ourselves," he said, "and also Philippa" (this he added incidentally), "if what we once thought so advisable should come to pass?"

"It would be the perpetration of an infamy," she answered, in a voice hoarse with rage. "It would be giving effect to a most wicked wrong."

"No doubt; and therefore we must take measures to put a stop to it."

"It will be very difficult, Edward, as well as cruel, now that matters have gone so far."

There was a touch of softness in her tone, and though only a touch it alarmed him.

"Of course it will be difficult," he answered, with grim contempt. "As to the cruelty, that is all nonsense; I mean, of course" (for he saw a flush of indignation glow on his companion's face), "that a girl like Grace is too young to know her own mind, and will not suffer as you and I would do under similar circumstances. For all that she has said, I still believe that she had a tenderness for Cheribert, and if this Sinclair was got rid of, she would find some other man equally to her mind. Let us confine ourselves to the difficulty. It is great, I admit, but not insuperable. The question I have come to ask you is whether you are prepared to see the vast fortune your father left behind him pass out of the family, or into one branch of it—"

"I am not," she put in, quickly. "I will never submit to such a wrong if I can help it. There is nothing I would not do—provided, of course, that it were not itself a wrong—to prevent its commission."

"That is spoken like yourself, Agnes," said Mr. Roscoe, approvingly. "I only hope I shall find others, to whom I must also look for assistance, as just and reasonable."

"Others? Do you mean Philippa?" she answered, with knitted brow.

"Well, you see, my dear, her interests are equally threatened by this document with your own. We must all put our shoulders to the wheel, and work together for once."

"We shall hardly have Grace with us, however," observed Agnes, dryly. "I am truly sorry to have to treat the dear girl in any way as an antagonist. But she ought to be able to see for herself how unfair and infamous—"

"So she would," put in Mr. Roscoe, hastily; "if her eyes were not blinded by her love for Walter, she would be the first to see it; we shall be in fact only working in the same interests as herself—namely, in those of truth and justice—if she were in a position to look at the matter from an unprejudiced stand-point. As it is, however, she must know nothing about this," and he tapped the document with his finger.

"And Richard?"

"Well, of course, Richard must never know. Why should he? The thing has been lost in the post, and there is no duplicate."

"Must it really be so? I hate deceit, Edward."

"So do I; but I hate injustice more—to those I love," he added, tenderly.

"When you say that, Edward, you make me feel for our poor Grace more than ever," said Agnes, softly. "Yet, as you say, there seems no other way out of it. How is it you propose to break off the match?"

"Leave that to me, my dear, just for the present; I wish to avoid distressing your tender heart more than is absolutely necessary. When I need your help I will tell you all. But in the mean time you must gradually—very gradually—cease your civilities to Mr. Sinclair. He is sharp enough in taking a hint, so be very careful not to give him an opportunity of asking you the reason of your change of manner. Indeed I am going to take him in hand myself, so that he will probably not think it necessary to put that question. You must drop him as gently as if he were made of glass, but never let Grace herself perceive that you are dropping him. Her too, poor dear, I shall have to deal with, using, however, arguments very different from those in his case. Many difficulties lie before me, as you may suppose, Agnes, but you shall see that they are not insuperable."

"You are a wonder, Edward," she exclaimed, with admiration. "It is your marvellous gift of persuasion that makes me sometimes doubt of you myself."

"Great heavens! do you mean that you think I would deceive *you*, Agnes?" he exclaimed, with indignation. "This is a poor return indeed for long and loving service."

"I only said sometimes, Edward," she replied, affectionately; "you must not be hasty with your Agnes, even though she is sometimes hasty with you."

"It is not your haste, my dear, but your impatience that I object to," he answered with a smile; "the present obstacle, however, will not, as you doubtless fear, delay our happiness, if all goes well with my plan."

"I am glad to hear it, indeed, for I am sick of delays, Edward," she answered, laying her jewelled hand upon his shoulder very tenderly.

"And so am I, dear Agnes;" and, to do him justice, he looked sick.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

PLAIN SPEAKING.

Mr. Roscoe had certainly no reason to be dissatisfied with the result of his interview with the head of the house. Agnes had agreed with his views, confessed herself as willing to assist his plans, and had almost forborne to question him about them. She had been content to leave matters in his hands, without even asking him what he had meant by saying that he had hoped to turn this misfortune that had happened to them to their own advantage. He would have told her if she had pressed him, but it was a relief to his mind—already so heavily weighted—that she had not done so. He was not grateful to her, however, because he knew that she had something to gain by her forbearance, and was also desirous to make up to him for the insolence (as he termed it) of her recent behavior. Philippa, he foresaw, would not be so easily won over. She had not so much to gain by pleasing him, and nothing to atone for. He would have to explain his scheme to her, and it would be much more distasteful to her than it would have seemed to her sister; she was more sentimental and soft-hearted, or, as he put it to himself with his usual frankness, in all things that concerned the feelings a greater fool. On the other hand, there were reasons why he could "say things" to Philippa which he could not venture upon with her elder sister. He could be more masterful with her, if need were, and also, strange to say, more tender without compromising himself. Indeed, his very first act on entering her boudoir was to put his arm round her waist and kiss her.

"Goodness gracious!" she exclaimed, "what is the matter, Edward?"

It was such a strange remark to make upon such an occurrence, had it been an unprecedented one, that we must take it for granted it had happened before; indeed, it was not his caress at all, but the expression of his face, which was very grave and sad, which had evoked it.

"A letter, my dear Philippa, has come to my brother to-day, which brings very bad news to you and me, and will require all your phi-

losophy to bear it. Instead of an obstacle to our happiness being, as we fondly thought, removed, it threatens us with ruin."

"With *ruin?*"

"Yes; with nothing less. It is no use deceiving ourselves upon that point, nor will it help us to reproach me for follies, as you have called them, of which I have been guilty. I will at once own I have been a fool, and so save time, which has become indeed an object to us. It is no longer a question of patience with us, but of now or never. Read *that.*" And he put the document into her hand with a deep-drawn sigh.

She read it with a frightened face, and none of the fury her sister had shown.

"This is indeed most cruel and unexpected," she said.

"Unexpected? Why, of course it is," he answered, with irritation; "but as to cruel, you refer, I suppose, to the measures which it will be necessary to take with Grace; you can hardly imagine that I intend it to take effect as regards ourselves."

"But how is it possible to avert it?"

"Well, for one thing, this marriage, of course, must be broken off."

"Grace's marriage? Break off dear Grace's marriage with Walter? Oh, Edward, you could surely never have the heart to do it!"

"I mean to try, at all events," he answered, curtly. "You must be a born idiot, Philippa, if you do not see the absolute necessity of it. A girl of her age is not so grievously to be pitied because she has made a false start in her first love venture. Women don't break their hearts about men whom they have known only for a few months."

"I will never consent to parting them," cried Philippa, bursting into tears.

"What! You prefer beggary, do you? Fortunately for you, I have an equal interest with yourself in this matter, and beggary will not suit *me.*"

"But why should there be anything of the kind, Edward? I know dear Grace's noble nature, and am very sure that when she comes to hear of this—for I conclude Walter has not told her—"

"I conclude so too," interrupted Mr. Roscoe, with bitter scorn, "for I have good reason to believe that Walter does not know it himself. You may also be assured that he never will know it."

"You have opened his letter, then?"

"Most certainly I have. If you should ever dare to dream of telling him so, I would throw it in the fire, and have you locked up

for a mad woman for having imagined such a story. Scruples, indeed! *You* to have scruples! Have you forgotten how your father died?"

"Oh, Heaven have pity upon me, since man has none!" cried the wretched woman, throwing herself into a chair and bursting into a torrent of tears.

"I am sorry to have been compelled to allude to so painful an incident," observed Mr. Roscoe, coldly, "but I cannot stand hypocrisy. You strain at a gnat after having swallowed a camel, hump and all. I really must decline to listen to such folly. I came here for your advice and assistance—"

"*My* advice!" she interrupted, bitterly, "when did you ever ask for my advice, or take it when it was offered?"

"What I understand you to propose, madam, is that we should throw ourselves upon the generosity of Mr. Walter Sinclair *per* Grace, his wife, and accept whatever terms he may in his magnanimity offer us. For my part I absolutely refuse to accept his charity. It would be too humiliating, and also, I am very sure, too limited. If *that* be your advice, you are correct in supposing that I think it worthless. Let me confine myself, then, to asking your assistance. I can get on without it, and as to any opposition on your part, it would be fruitless, and you would repent it to the last hour of your life, though it would not perhaps be a very long one. Lives have been cut short in domestic circles before now—"

"Oh, spare me, spare me!" groaned the unhappy woman.

"By all means. I wish not only to spare you, but to benefit you all I can, if you will only be a reasonable being. Though your help is not indispensable, it would be very welcome, and would certainly be of service in breaking the blow which necessity compels me to inflict upon your sister. I regret it as much as yourself, but I have a plan in my head which in the end may not only turn this seeming misfortune to our advantage, but console Miss Grace for the loss of her lover."

"Console her!" answered Philippa, with amazement. "What can ever console a girl for such a loss?"

"Another lover."

The suggestion was offered in all good faith, and without the least touch of sarcasm, but had the speaker guessed its effect upon his hearer he would have given a good deal to have recalled its utterance. There are some subjects on which it is very dangerous for a man to confess his cynicism to one of the other sex. Philippa made

no answer, which gratified her companion, since it bespoke submission to his will, but what he had said had fallen upon the little spark of respect for him that was still alive in her breast, and extinguished it forever. Love still survived there, as it will do long after respect is dead; but it was not the love it had been. Passion had long fled from it, Trust had wellnigh vanished too, and even Hope itself was on the wing.

"Yes, Philippa," he continued, after a long pause, "it is my intention that Grace shall marry my brother Richard."

Numb and dulled as the poor woman's feelings had become under the weight of that inevitable will, his words still evoked a shrill note of astonishment.

"Richard!"

"Yes; you women plume yourselves on your sagacity in such matters, but I'll wager that the notion of Richard being in love with your sister has never entered into your mind. I have perceived it, however, for many a day; it is only with the utmost difficulty that he can conceal his passion for her."

The information interested while it shocked her; no matter how cramped and crushed may be a woman's heart, there is one subject to which it never ceases to vibrate with sympathy.

"He has concealed it," she observed. "I am certain that Grace knows nothing of it."

"Of course not—not a word, not a whisper, thanks to me; any hint of it would have been most inconvenient, perhaps even detrimental to our plans. I persuaded him that his suit would be the maddest folly. It will be much easier to persuade him of the contrary. And if—as will as surely happen as I am a living man—these second nuptials shall be accomplished, instead of her having a husband of whose nature we know little, and who might have given us trouble in a hundred ways, she will have one who in my hands will be as clay to the potter, and so out of this nettle Danger we shall pluck the flower Safety."

"And Grace?"

"Well, Grace, of course, will be our difficulty, although the only one. I have a plan, however, which, sooner or later, will succeed even with Grace. We cannot, of course, expect that she will transfer her affections from one to the other so quickly as would be desirable. In love affairs a girl is never reasonable; but still I have reasons, I think, that will not only persuade her to give Walter up, but will at least clear the way for Richard. She is well inclined to

him already in a sisterly way. You don't think much of that, and I don't wonder; I use the phrase, of course, in its common acceptation, and she is *not* his sister. We all know what comes of such platonic attachments when no nearer one can be got. A woman who has been 'disappointed,' as she calls it, will marry out of pique rather than not marry at all. She feels the need of 'something to cling to,' and one stick will serve her turn as well as another."

He paused, but there was no reply.

"Do you hear me, madam? Are you favoring me with your attention?" he inquired, passionately.

"Oh yes, I hear you!" answered Philippa, despairingly, "and alas! I understand you very well."

"Then also heed. The help that I require from you is simply this: to cease from expressing any of that morbid sympathy which you have lavished—as it now turns out, have wasted—upon this interesting young couple. Without being rude to Walter, be cold and discouraging to him. Let him understand, but without giving him a pretext for asking for an explanation, that something has caused you to change your views of his pretensions. If he does ask, refer him to me. The task I set you is an easy one enough."

"It is not easy," she answered, in broken tones; "but since needs must, I will perform it."

"There's a good girl!" He patted her cheek—it was as cold as marble—as if she had been a child. "You are about to do what is very distasteful to you, I know, and, as you believe, solely for my sake; but it is for both our sakes. We shall be stronger—you and I—when this has come to pass, against the common enemy. Grace's husband—and therefore Grace—will be on our side. Again I say that this document, which now seems so harmful to us, will prove beneficial to our interests."

"What are you going to do with it?" she inquired, in a faint voice.

"Well, that is my business. I shall probably put it in the fire. Now I am going to Grace."

"With that in your pocket?" she murmured, apprehensively.

"Why not? She can no more read it through this cloth"—and he tapped his breast—"than she can read my heart on the other side of it. It will be the hardest morning's work that I have ever had to do; but 'men must work and women must weep,' is the sentence that Fate has passed upon us. Good-bye, my dear, and wish

me well through with it;" and once more he touched her cheek with his false lips.

She forced a smile as he left her, but it vanished as the door closed behind him, and was succeeded by a look of misery and despair.

"Wish him well!"—no, she did not even wish herself well. It was blasphemy to hope that good would come to anybody from what he was about to do. She pitied Grace from the bottom of her soul, but she pitied herself too. If Grace were doomed to lose her lover, she, too, had lost faith in the man to whom she had given her love. "'She cannot read my heart,' he said," she moaned, piteously; "how should she when he has no heart to read?"

CHAPTER XL.

THE NAKED TRUTH.

Although Mr. Roscoe had the *entrée* to Grace's bower, as he had to her sisters', a visit from him, in her case, was by no means such a matter of course. His knock at her boudoir door, with the announcement of his name, in reply to a somewhat severe "Who is that?"—in a tone that is used by one who is engaged in some occupation not agreeable, but in which he does not wish to be disturbed—did not receive the ready "Pray come in" that he had been favored with on the two previous instances. He was kept waiting at the door time enough to note the circumstance; moreover, when the permission to enter was given, it did not escape him that it was in a despondent voice. Grace, indeed, had been crying, as he saw at a glance, and also the reason of it, for although she had put away Mr. Allerton's letter, its envelope still lay on the table.

"I wish to have a few words with you, Grace, if you please." He never addressed her thus familiarly unless the subject was of an importance that seemed to excuse it.

She bowed, and motioned him to a chair. Her silence, as he rightly judged, was compulsory; she could not trust herself to speak.

"I am afraid you have had bad news this morning," he murmured, sympathetically.

"Nothing to speak of," she answered, coldly—so coldly, indeed, that the tone seemed almost to imply, "nothing to speak of to *you;* it is my own affair."

"I deeply regret it," he answered, gently, "and the more so since I am myself—most unwillingly, as you may be sure—the bearer of evil tidings. But perhaps I have been anticipated," and he looked significantly at the envelope.

"You mean the letter I have just received from Mr. Allerton? No, there is nothing in it of which I was not aware before."

"He has heard, I suppose, of your proposed engagement" (she looked up indignantly at that word "proposed," as he had known she would, and he kept his own eyes upon the floor), "and has written to express his dissatisfaction with it. He takes a lawyer's view of it, no doubt; points out you are throwing yourself (by which he means your fortune) away in marrying one forbidden by your father's will. If he has no argument to use but that, he might have saved his time, and you your six-and-eight-pence. It was my impression that he had written of a more serious obstacle."

"I do not understand you, Mr. Roscoe—what other obstacle? Not that it matters; nothing that Mr. Allerton or any other person might say could affect the matter of which you speak. Indeed, I would not even listen to it."

"Quite so," he answered, gravely; "no one has a right to interfere with your private affairs. Your regard for Mr. Sinclair is a sacred matter—I feel that myself. Let us suppose that what has come to my knowledge—and must needs come to his—affects some one else, not him. If anything I am obliged to tell you seems to chime in with anything he has told you of his previous history, put that aside: judge the whole matter from without as a mere looker-on, and decide upon it without favor or prejudice. That will be the honestest way of coming to a right decision."

She looked up at him, less in alarm than scorn, though she *was* alarmed, he saw; what her face expressed besides its fear was a doubt of his being the sort of person to recommend what was right, and especially upon the ground of honesty. The suggestion of this rather assisted him in his present purpose, because it set him against her, and stifled the feeble pity he had felt for her.

"I must go back a little," he continued, "to start with, into what to you must seem ancient history—to what happened years ago, when you were a little child.

"A certain man of business in the city, very wealthy, but whose only desire in the world was to increase his store, had a poor cousin in the country, who, with the exception of his own family, was his only relative. They had been boys together at school, and he had

perhaps as much regard for him as he was capable of feeling for anything outside his money-bags. This cousin applied to him respecting the investment of a few thousands—almost all he had in the world—and the other gave him his advice. It was the most that he was ever known to give to anybody, and indeed it was generally of value. When I say 'gave,' however, it was never given for nothing. He was by trade a money-lender—a skinflint, or rather a skin-diamond, for he seldom concerned himself with any client who could not, directly or indirectly (though more often the latter), repay him handsomely for his services. In the case of his cousin, however, he charged him nothing (at first), and recommended him an investment which, though speculative, he had every reason to believe would turn out to be exceedingly profitable. It was, if I remember right (but this can be easily certified), a certain mine in Cornwall. The money-lender, indeed, thought so well of it that he had placed a sum to which the other's subscription (though it was, as I have said, his all) was a mere bagatelle in the speculation himself. As time went on the mine ceased to perform the promise it had given, and its shares fell lower and lower in the market till they became almost valueless. Then the man in the country, grievously alarmed, as he well might be, wrote to his kinsman for his advice again. 'I am sure you did the best for me you could,' he said, 'and indeed must have lost your own money. Of course, I have not a word of reproach to write, but I am wellnigh ruined; so be so good as to dispose of these unhappy shares for me at whatever they realize. I am resolved to go to America, there to endeavor to make a livelihood for my wife and son, which is denied them here.' It was a pathetic letter (I read it with my own eyes), and almost touched the money-lender, but not quite. He knew more about the mine than any one else except its manager, who was in his pay, and had privately given him news that a lode of great extent had just been discovered in it. Without an expenditure of sixpence, and by merely telling his cousin to 'hold on,' he could have made a fortune for him; but the temptation of adding some thousands, at the price of a few pounds, to his ill-gotten gains, was too strong for him; he wrote to the poor cousin, saying that the shares were unsalable, but that for the sake of old times, and because the same blood ran in his veins (for there was nothing on earth that the man did not make subservient to his own aggrandizement), he would purchase them himself for, I think (but this also can be ascertained, no doubt), for £300. The offer was accepted; the cousin emigrated with his wife and son on the proceeds

of the transaction, and the money-lender within twelve months made £20,000 by it."

"What has this hateful act by this wicked man to do with me?" inquired Grace, defiantly.

"Nothing. You hear of it, of course, for the first time; but let me conclude my story. The cousin by some means or other learned how he had been cheated, and told the story to his son, without, however (as I have good reason to believe, though I cannot understand this reticence), revealing the name of the relative who had robbed him. The result of that robbery was that the mother, succumbing to fatigues and privations, died soon after, and the father, after a hard and wretched life, was slain by Indians; the son—"

He paused, and looked at Grace with keen significance. Her face was white as death; but there was a fire in her eyes and in her tone, as she exclaimed, "Go on!"

"The son, I am grieved to say, Grace, is Walter Sinclair, and the man who robbed his father was *your* father."

"You lie!" she thundered. "My father was the best and kindest of men."

"Was he? Ask your friend, Mr. Allerton—*he* knows. Ask Lord Morella who was the money-lender who caught his son, Lord Cheribert, in his meshes, and stripped him of thousands. Ask your sisters, and they will tell you what everybody else is aware of except yourself, that the man who thus made gold his idol, and sacrificed his kinsman to it (as he had sacrificed hundreds of others), was no other than Joseph Tremenhere."

Of the last part of this speech Grace had no knowledge; she had thrown up her arms before it was concluded, and, with a piteous cry of desolation and despair, had fallen on the ground in a dead faint. Under such circumstances man, unless he is medical, is generally useless and inclined to run away, but Mr. Roscoe was not an ordinary specimen of his sex; moreover, even had he preferred "absence of body to presence of mind," the apprehension of what she might say to other ears on coming to herself kept him in the path of duty. He lifted her up in his strong arms and placed her on the sofa, from which he removed the pillow, and sprinkling a little water on her face from the jug in the next room, which he did not scruple to enter, awaited events with a philosophical mind. Grace did not come to herself for some minutes, and when she did so, still remained with closed eyes, only too conscious, doubtless, of whom she would behold should she open them.

"Does Walter know?" were her first words.

"No, dear Grace, of course not," answered her companion, comfortingly. "I came here to spare you that; but of course he must be put in possession of the facts sooner or later. From what I have heard of his devotion to the memory of his father, what has come to light is a thing that he can never forget or forgive. Of course you had nothing to do with it, but there is the sentiment, you see."

She put up her hand as if in appeal for silence.

"You feel that yourself, I'm sure. It is only too obvious that all between you and him must be over. There is no need to mention the real cause to anybody—not to Mr. Allerton, for instance—but only to your sisters, and even that is only as you please. Trust to me to arrange this unhappy matter so as to give you—and indeed Walter also—as little pain as possible. You will find, no doubt, in the letter you received this morning an excuse that will satisfy the outside world." Her hand moved feebly in the direction of the door. "You wish to be left alone. No doubt that is your wisest course. This is a thing to be thought about and not talked about, even with one who has your interests so near at heart as I have. But I need scarcely impress upon you that there is only one course to be pursued. If you could make the effort, it would save a world of distress and pain to both of you if you would give me a few words in writing just to authorize me to act for you as regards Walter. Write, for instance, 'Seek not to see me; Mr. Roscoe will tell you all,' and sign it. That will be quite sufficient." He pushed the writing materials that lay upon the table close to her hand, and she feebly raised herself, and with a dazed, despairing look obeyed him.

"That's a brave girl. Do not hate me, Grace, for the part I have been obliged to play in this miserable business," and with that he left her.

She tottered to the door, locked it, and then sank into a chair. Except that her position was one of utter misery, for the moment she hardly realized it. She had fallen from the highest rung of the ladder of human happiness on the stones of blank despair. An hour ago she had possessed everything that fortune could give her, and now she was a beggar whose wretchedness no alms could repair. She had already lost her father, and it had been a bitter trial to her, but she had now lost him again in a far more dreadful manner. Would she had never known him at all! To think how she had loved him—yes, and he her! Had she not been his "pet," his "joy," his "little fairy?"—and all in vain—or as it seemed in vain; for she had in

truth been loving another father, shaped out of her own childish imagination, and with whom this real one had nothing in common. She had no doubt now of her wretched and irretrievable error. A hundred evidences of what had been his calling, though not one of them had witnessed against him before, crowded on her mind. And even still—there was the pity of it—she loved him. An oppressor of the needy; one who took advantage of the necessities of his fellow-creatures, and an unfair advantage—a thief, a thief, a thief!—and yet she loved him still.

Her Walter too was lost forever—a thought sufficient of itself to make death a boon (ah, if she could but die!); but for the moment even that thought was overwhelmed by the spectacle of what had been the idol of her life shattered in fragments before her, with its front of brass and feet of clay!

CHAPTER XLI.

RICHARD TO THE RESCUE.

"As easy as lying," is a common proverb, but it must have been invented by an optimist; one might just as well say "As easy as writing fiction," which is not such a facile thing as those who have not tried it are apt to imagine. Mr. Edward Roscoe was a past-master in the art of "making the thing that is not as the thing that is," but now and then even he found it a difficult job. When he left Grace Tremenhere's boudoir, the perspiration stood upon his brow, so severe had been his exertion in that way, though indeed he had not been exactly lying, but only what doctors and prize-fighters call "putting on flesh" as regarded what was a very genuine skeleton of fact. The task that lay before him now seemed simple in comparison with that severe operation, for it is so much easier to deal with a man, where the affections are concerned, than with a woman; and his next "call"—as ruinous as that of a broken bank on its unhappy shareholders—was on Walter Sinclair. Most men in his position would at least have taken that stolen document out of his breast-pocket, and either destroyed it or put it in some place of safety before seeking an interview with its rightful owner; but Mr. Roscoe's heart was furnished with the triple brass of the poet, and indeed there was a great amount of the same material in the whole of his composition.

He found Walter at his desk, busily engaged on some subject connected with his future work, "plan, elevation, and section," drawn by rule and line; a miracle of mechanical neatness to which Mr. Roscoe paid his little tribute of admiration before entering on the matter in hand.

"How I envy you your dexterity," he observed. "I am so clumsy with my fingers myself that such work as yours looks like magic. I am sorry to interrupt it, but the fact is I have got some bad news for you, which does not admit of delay."

"Bad news!" exclaimed Walter, throwing down pencil and compass, and looking up at him with some suspicion as well as alarm, which the other did not fail to note.

"Yes; it is bad news, but, believe me, I am only the unwilling bringer of it, and not the cause."

"From whom do you come, then?"

"From Miss Grace. Here are my credentials."

Walter took the strip of paper, and read in what he knew was her hand—though the writing was blurred and trembling—"Seek not to see me; Mr. Roscoe will tell you all. GRACE TREMENHERE."

"Great Heaven!" he said, "what is the meaning of this?"

"The meaning is that she bids you farewell—that all is over between you."

"It is false!" cried Walter, passionately.

Mr. Roscoe shrugged his shoulders. "It is her writing, not mine," he said. "She chose me for the duty I am compelled to perform. You may add to its unpleasantness by insulting me, but I shall perform it all the same."

"Say what you have got to say, sir, though I will never believe that she told you to say it."

"That's a matter which—if you don't mind her breaking her heart—you can learn from her own lips; but she was in hopes that for the sake of all that has passed between you you would spare her."

"Go on!" exclaimed the young man, fiercely.

"The person against whom your passion should be directed, if it must have an object," continued Mr. Roscoe, "is your friend, Mr. Allerton. He has discovered, I know not how, that you have been paying your attentions to Miss Grace, and a letter has come to her from him this morning. So much I know myself. What the letter contains I have learned only from her. He is her guardian and trustee, you know."

"I know *that*," put in the other, impatiently.

"Well, since that is the case, he has a right, not indeed to dispose of her hand, but to see that the disposal of it does not involve the loss of her fortune. It is his simple duty, and one in aid of which he could, and would, invoke the law."

"That is not true," replied Walter; "I mean as regards the loss of her fortune. She told me so with her own lips."

"I think you must be mistaken there," said Mr. Roscoe, mildly. "She could not have said that, because she is acquainted with the terms of her father's will."

"She did not say so in so many words; but she told me, when I spoke of the gulf that existed between us as regards disparity of fortune, that there was no such gulf."

Mr. Roscoe smiled a pitying smile.

"She was right there, my poor fellow. If she married you there would indeed be no such disparity, because by doing so she would have lost her fortune. It was love that caused her so to express herself; I do not deny for a moment that she loves you. We all know it, and in our love for her we were all willing that she should sacrifice her all, because we felt that in that sacrifice she would find her happiness. We are not lawyers, nor her trustees and guardians, as Mr. Allerton is. It is just possible (though I have a better opinion of you) that even now, in the teeth of his opposition (which, however, will be very formidable, I promise you), you may press your suit. But would it be honorable, would it become any one calling himself a man, to take advantage of the simplicity and affection of a young girl under such circumstances, even if she were prepared to give up what is nothing less than a huge fortune, and to accept a life of poverty for your sake—and I honestly tell you that she is not so prepared, and sends me here to tell you so? Would you take her on such terms? If I know you, Walter Sinclair, as the son of an honest man, and an honest man yourself, you would not so take her."

Walter turned from his companion, and with his elbows on the desk, and his face hidden in his hands, uttered one solitary groan, the knell of his bright hopes.

"Of course it is a terrible trial to you; but it was a worse one to her. The struggle between love and duty is always a cruel one; but Grace is duty itself. She idolized her father, and what he expressly forbade (as Mr. Allerton pointed out to her) she repents of having been about to do. You loved and respected *your* father, Walter; would *you* not hesitate to disobey his last solemn injunctions? I think you would."

"Stop! there is something wrong here," exclaimed the young man, suddenly, rising slowly from his seat, and confronting his companion with so keen a glance that it needed all his hardihood to meet it coolly. "When we were on the river this summer Lord Cheribert was with us. He was himself in love with Grace (how, indeed, could he help it, poor fellow!). Every one knows it as well as I, except perhaps Grace herself; Mr. Allerton knew it, and if, as you say—but I forgot, he was a wealthy man."

"Just so," said Mr. Roscoe, persuasively. ("Thank Heaven, this fool has never looked at Josh's will for himself," was his inward reflection.) "Or, if he was not wealthy, he had vast expectations. He would have brought as much as he found. There were not the same objections to him as in your case, though there *were* objections."

"Nevertheless, I must see her," exclaimed Walter, desperately. "There may be some way of escape, some loop-hole. Or the whole thing may be a mistake, a plot. You villain, you dog!" he cried, seizing the other by his coat-collar (within an inch of where the secret lay), "if this is any plan of yours to part us, I will have your heart's-blood."

"Be so good as to unhand me, sir, for my own temper is somewhat short," said Mr. Roscoe, resolutely. "This is scarcely the reward one looks for for breaking bad news to a fellow-creature. Go to Grace, then, by all means, and put the finishing stroke to Mr. Allerton's morning's work. Only if it kills her, sir, it will be no less than murder."

"Go, go, or there will be murder *here!*" exclaimed the young man, furiously: and throwing open the door, he thrust the other from the room, slammed the door behind him, and locked himself in. The whole thing did not take a minute, but it was full of "action." The impression on Mr. Roscoe's mind, though not upon his body, was that he had been *kicked* out.

"I will be even with you for this, my man," was what he muttered to himself with lips pale with rage, though, if he could have looked at matters with an unprejudiced eye, the obligation still lay upon the other side.

Left to his own maddening thoughts, Walter Sinclair sat at his desk, with that scrap in Grace's handwriting spread out before him, "Seek not to see me; Mr. Roscoe will tell you all;" examining it with the anxious scrutiny one who is conscious of a lack of clearness in his mind necessary for its elucidation might have bestowed upon a cryptogram. The words indeed were plain enough, and their meaning had been explained to him with sufficient distinctness, but

was it the true meaning? Upon the whole, he was forced to the conclusion that it was. If it was a lie, one line from Allerton, not to mention one word from Grace's lips, would, as Roscoe must be well aware, have confuted it. His arguments, indeed, had, from a worldly point of view, been overwhelming. Cursed be the gold that is weighed in the scales with true love! but it kicks the beam. To Grace's guardian and trustee it could not seem otherwise, nor did he blame him; he only blamed the gold. With Grace herself he knew it had no such weight; but that very fact, as Roscoe had pointed out, should prevent him from pressing his suit. Her simplicity and ignorance, her girlish contempt for the gifts of fortune, were only apparent allies; it would be cowardly to take advantage of those means if he could bring himself to do so; there were her father's last injunctions, which in her new-found love she had perhaps forgotten till the lawyer had reminded her of them. He had vaguely heard that Mr. Tremenhere had made his fortune as a money-lender, a circumstance that had in no way affected him. He might have been a good man for all that; that he had been a loving father to Grace was certain, and she had reciprocated his love with all the warmth of her nature. He was himself devoted to his father's memory, and as Roscoe had cunningly surmised, that circumstance had great weight with him; he put himself in Grace's place, and sided with her, as it were, against himself.

Still, to part with him without a word of farewell seemed unnatural, hard, and cruel, and utterly foreign to Grace's nature. True, there was her handwriting before him, "Seek not to see me." The question was, by what process had those words been wrung from her? If she had written them of her own free-will, his duty was plain: he must pack up his things and leave Halswater Hall at once.

When he had gone away—whither he could not tell; all places seemed alike to him, and all hateful—he would write, and wish her farewell. She could reply to him or not, as she pleased. He staggered into his bedroom, and began putting his clothes together with blind haste. While thus occupied he heard a violent knock at his sitting-room door.

"Who is it?" he asked, hoarsely.

"It is I, Richard Roscoe. Open!"

To see any one just then was a trial he was ill fitted to undergo; the thought of an interview with this man, half mad as he believed him to be, and wholly unfitted to sympathize with such a calamity as had befallen him, was especially distasteful to him.

"I am busy," he called out.

"No matter," was the impatient reply, "I must see you." And again came the loud summons at the door.

Fearing that the servants would be alarmed, and a disturbance created, when it was so necessary that anything of the kind should be avoided, he opened the door, and a moment afterwards repented of it.

Richard Roscoe stood before him, his face white and wet, his hair dishevelled, his eyes rolling in what seemed like frenzy, and, in a word, more like a madman than he had ever seen him. He entered hastily, and at once relocked the door.

"Don't be afraid of me," he said, in breathless tones, as though he had perceived what was passing through the other's mind; "I am not mad, though I have heard enough to make me so. What are you doing here—packing up? I thought so. What is that paper in Grace's handwriting?"

In one stride he had reached the desk and read her words.

"How dare you?" exclaimed Walter, passionately.

"Sir, I dare anything for Grace's sake," was the unexpected rejoinder. "'Mr. Roscoe will tell you all,' she says, but she does not know the man as his brother does. 'Seek not to see me.' But you *shall* see her. Sit down, Walter Sinclair, and listen to *me*."

CHAPTER XLII.

THE BROTHERS.

After the unpleasant parting Mr. Edward Roscoe had had with Walter Sinclair, it might have seemed probable that he would have had enough of interviews for the day; but not only was his brother Richard, to whom he had also a word or two to say, under the same roof and close at hand, but the very violence with which he had been treated in the one case was a spur to him in the other. His anger against the young man was very great, and, as it happened, the communication he had to make to Richard comprehended in it the greatest blow to Walter's hopes that could possibly be struck; "which," as a greater hypocrite than even Mr. Roscoe has observed before him, "was very soothing." He had no doubt, in spite of the self-restraint his brother had used in his relations with Grace, that his feeling towards her remained unchanged, and also that, notwith-

standing his apparent friendship with her lover, he in reality regarded him with all the disfavor of an unsuccessful rival. Though far from falling into the error of less sagacious scoundrels in judging his fellow-creatures by himself, Mr. Roscoe was incapable of understanding such a virtue as magnanimity.

It was, in fact, in a tone which honestly expressed his convictions that as soon as he had entered his brother's room he observed, with cheerful gravity:

"Richard, my lad, I have got some good news for you!"

"Indeed!" answered Richard, bitterly, as he rose from his seat to greet him, and put down the book he had been reading, "then it must be very strange news."

"It *is* strange news, my good fellow — stranger than anything you can have imagined, better than anything you can have dreamed of! Sit down and listen to it, for it will make your limbs tremble under you with joy. The engagement between Grace and Walter Sinclair has been broken off!"

"What!" Only a word, only a monosyllable, but what a tumult of emotions—hope and love and pity and amazement—did it express! The very face of the man was transfigured with them.

"Yes, it is as true as death. The whole thing is over; Grace is now fancy-free—is at all events free to have a fancy for some one else. There is now a chance for *you*, man!"

Richard looked at him with wondering eyes; he was so full indeed of astonishment that he was unable to take in the whole situation as it was thus suddenly presented to him. He did not even catch the meaning of his brother's words, which could certainly not have been from their want of distinctness. His mind could hardly grasp the stupendous fact that had been disclosed to him, far less its probable consequences.

"Have they quarrelled?" he inquired, in a hoarse whisper.

"I am happy to say they have not, for we all know what lovers' quarrels end in. The thing goes far deeper than that. You may take my word for it that they will never see each other again."

Mr. Edward Roscoe's word was a guarantee beyond suspicion to almost everybody at Halswater Hall, but (doubtless because of the eccentricity of Richard's character) his brother seemed to doubt it; nay, with a frankness that, however common in the western wilds, is unusual in polite society, he coldly replied, "I don't believe you, Edward. It is only because you have some end of your own to serve that you wish to make me credit such an incredible statement."

"A very natural supposition, my dear Dick," answered the other, cheerfully, "and one that does honor to your intelligence; but you have only to step across the passage into Walter's room to get the matter certified. I wouldn't do it just now, if I were you, because he's rather upset about it; there will be plenty of time before he starts, though I suppose he will be off this afternoon."

"Do you mean to say he is leaving Halswater?"

"Well, I conclude he is. From what I have told you, you will see for yourself that no other course is open to him."

"How did it come about?" inquired Richard.

"Well, it was all through Mr. Allerton. He is her guardian, and has forbidden the banns, as he has the power to do. If she had had any sense she would have married Walter at once, and then written to the lawyer to say so; but he has somehow discovered her engagement, and put his foot down on it. She will be wiser next time, Dick, you may take your oath of that."

"And she has given him up because the lawyer tells her to do so?"

"I don't say that exactly; there are other reasons I am bound in honor not to go into, and which you must not press me about. But what is the main thing—as concerns yourself—the match is broken off."

"Poor lad, poor lad!"

"Well, of course one is sorry for him, but one must look after one's self in this world. It is an ill wind that blows nobody good, and without your having any hand in it, without your having the least thing to reproach yourself with, a good opportunity has opened to you. I suppose, though you did what you could to smother your affection for the young woman, the cinders of it are still alive?"

"I love Grace—oh yes, I love her still!" murmured Richard, softly.

"That's right. You have a faithful heart, I know, Dick. So have I, though the object of its desire may be a little different. We both stick to our views. It runs in the family. Well, you know what I told you of the reason that first caused me to write you to come home from America. Circumstances did away with that reason for the time, but it has now sprung to life again. I had a matrimonial engagement for you in my mind, which I must confess is a merely practical one; the idea never entered into it that the young woman I designed for you would become the girl of your heart, but fortunately it has so turned out. A few hours ago she was altogether out of your reach, now she has come within it; you have only to put your arms about her, though I need not say that must be done

in a most cautious and delicate fashion. At first, of course, she will be inconsolable for the loss of her first love; but little by little the gilt of sentiment will be rubbed off, and half a loaf—if I may say so without offence, for you are really neither so young nor so good-looking as Sinclair—will seem better than no bread."

"I see," said Richard, gently (he had his hands before his eyes, and seemed lost in thought), then added, with effort, like one rousing himself from sleep, "What would you have me do?"

"Just now, nothing. What I would recommend for the present is a 'masterly inaction'; bide your time—by which of course I mean your opportunity; sooner or later it is sure to come. Be as gentle and sympathizing with the girl as you please, but do not drop a word of love. She will want something to cling to, and in due course that should be you. There will be objections to you, as there were to Sinclair, on the lawyer's part, no doubt, but she will not sacrifice her happiness a second time for a mere sentiment, which by then, moreover, will have grown weaker. Upon the whole," concluded Mr. Roscoe, cheerfully, "I really believe this misfortune, as it first seemed to us, will turn out but a blessing in disguise."

"It is very good of you to take such an interest in my affairs," observed Richard.

His brother glanced up at him very sharply, but there was nothing to be read on the other's face but a settled gloom.

"Blood is thicker than water, my lad," answered Edward. "It will give me unfeigned pleasure to see you comfortably settled in life, but I must frankly add that it will be also advantageous to myself. As Grace's husband you will be one of the family, and I shall be able to arrange matters with you much more easily than with a stranger—such as Sinclair, for example. I shall feel easier in my mind, by-the-bye, when that young gentleman is out of the house."

"You are sure that he will not insist upon seeing Grace before he takes his departure?"

"That is quite settled. To do him justice, he acknowledged, when I pointed it out to him, that it would be a most selfish act, and only give her unnecessary pain: it would also (which I did not point out to him) be a most dangerous experiment."

"You mean to our interests?"

"Well, of course, in the presence of the once beloved object she might lose sight of her obvious duty. She has made up her mind to perform it, and it would be madness to give him the chance of shaking her resolution. He, too, has come to the same decision.

But if he could be persuaded to be off without seeing any member of the family it would be a great point gained. He is attached to you, and has not the least suspicion of your feelings towards Grace; it would be well if you could persuade him to leave at once. You can tell him that I will gladly explain matters for him to Agnes and Philippa."

"I will," said Richard, decisively.

"That's a good fellow. In the mean time, while you are getting him away, I will see that all is safe in the other quarter. Use all the arguments you can think of, and remember that you are now taking the first step on the road to your happiness. When I next see you I hope we shall have the cottage to ourselves," and with that he left the room.

Notwithstanding the readiness with which he had fallen in with his brother's suggestion, Richard did not at once proceed upon his promised errand. He stood with his eyes closed and his hands clasped tightly before him; his lips moved as if in prayer, and the words "Deliver us from temptation" fell from them in broken tones. If his brother could have seen him he would certainly have said, "This man is mad," yet even so, perhaps would not have deemed him too mad to marry. "Walter, Walter!" he murmured to himself, pitifully, and then in still tenderer tones, "Grace, Grace!" The struggle within him, as it showed itself in his face, was terrible to witness; now his better nature and now his worse seemed to be getting the upperhand; at last the former triumphed, but with so great difficulty, with such a dead lift of all his powers for good, that he could not trust himself to let the debate begin again. He ran out of the room and knocked at Walter's door, crying "Open, open!" Despair was in his heart, but from every thought of baseness it had been swept clean.

CHAPTER XLIII.

METHOD IN HIS MADNESS.

Though the look and manner of Richard Roscoe were so strange and wild, there was a fervor and earnestness in the tone in which he said, "Sit down and I will tell you all," that commanded Sinclair's attention; even a madman may have a story to tell that has nothing to do with his own state of mind, and may have pith and moment in it.

"You see before you an unfortunate man," he began, "but not a rogue and a liar; you may trust me—yes, you may trust me now—as your father trusted me before; you may say, indeed, to his own undoing, but that was owing to no fault of mine, but to human weakness, and you have heard the worst of it from my own lips."

"I do not think you were to blame in that matter," said Walter, gently; "if you were so, though it was a dreadful business, you have my full forgiveness, as I am sure you had that of my poor father."

"I thank you for saying so, my lad, with all my heart. With such words in my ears I should be a villain indeed were I to play you false. It is not a pleasant thing to have to say that one's own mother's son is a rascal, but there is no help for it but to confess as much; my brother Edward is one of that sort. He has been so from his cradle. Yes, Heaven knows I have tried to think otherwise, though I have had proof enough to the contrary. It seems an unnatural and ungrateful thing to speak, when I am at this moment sharing the roof and eating the bread that his good offices have obtained for me. And let me tell you, Walter Sinclair, he has promised me much more—a reward so great that I dare not even think of it—if I will only join him in his cursed plans and help to accomplish your ruin!"

"My ruin?" cried Walter, in astonishment.

"Yes, what else? To tear you from her you love, to take away the only object from you that serves to make life worth the living, to drive you out of Paradise into a barren land, where not a flower grows nor a bird sings, and the sun itself only rises to show you your own wretchedness—is not *that* ruin?"

"It is, indeed," groaned Walter; "I have been face to face with it, for what seems an eternity, the last hour."

"Well, that shall not be. Had I been in your case no power on earth would have made me believe that those words written by Grace's hand came from her heart."

"But your brother—"

"Still less would I have believed *his* words," broke in the other, contemptuously. "You did not know him, it is true, as I know him, but you knew *her*, and how could you think even for an instant that the advice of a lawyer, or the reflection that she should lose money by it, were it millions, would cause that angelic nature to break her plighted word and forsake the man she loves?"

"It is not the money, Richard—though that has weight with me,

but not with her—nor the arguments of her guardian; it is 'the dead hand' that has turned her from me—the last injunction of a loving father."

"That is what Edward told you, did he?" answered Richard, bitterly. "He said there were other reasons for which I must not press. His delicacy of mind was always extraordinary, though he forgot it for a moment in taking it for granted that I was even a greater scoundrel than himself. I don't believe his story. There is at all events some huge lie at the bottom of his mountain of words; there always is, if you dig deep enough. I am here to help you to dig."

"I am infinitely obliged to you," said Walter, hoarsely; "only show me where to put the spade in."

"Well, to begin with, stop where you are till you find there are real grounds for your departure, and, above all, take no dismissal save from Grace's own lips."

"She says, 'Seek not to see me,'" answered Walter, piteously. "I love her too dearly to disobey her."

"She does *not* say it, she *writes* it," answered Richard, confidently, "which is a very different thing. I have known men, captive in Indian hands, compelled to write things to their friends quite other than what their hearts dictated, yet their end, poor souls, was all the same; and so it will be with Grace, if you give way to this wretched scruple. When he has his point to gain Edward is an Indian—subtle, treacherous, and, though not delighting, as they do, in the torture they inflict, utterly callous to it. Somehow or other—I have not his wits, and cannot read his brain, but I know *the man*—somehow or other Grace Tremenhere has become his captive; his net is round her—she is beating her tender wings against it, poor soul, poor soul! but his will is her will, and these words his words. If such a stake were worth speaking of, I would lay my life upon it."

The rude eloquence of his words was backed by an earnestness and conviction that would have made their way to any heart, even had it harbored no such desire to be convinced as Walter's did.

"I will stay here till Grace tells me to go," he said. "How can I ever thank you enough for bringing me this ray of hope?"

"You never can," was the grave rejoinder. "Thank Heaven that sent me here instead. Remain in your room, whatever happens, till I come back with tidings of how the land lies. Budge for nobody, and least of all for my brother; he has no more right to give you notice to quit the Hall than I have. No one has any right to do it save Grace only."

It was strange to see one so eccentric thus dictating a course of action to another of sane mind, and so it struck Walter himself; but when we desire anything very much we are not solicitous to inquire closely into the capacity or the motives of those who volunteer their assistance to us. The notion of any plot having been devised against him had never entered Walter's head, but, once there, it filled him with an indignation that would have astonished the plotter. A generous and impulsive nature is easily imposed upon, but having discovered that it has been so, it often becomes more dangerous to deal with than a more calculating one. It has a wrong to humanity to avenge as well as its private wrong—a sentiment which is absolutely unintelligible to the mere scoundrel. It was fortunate perhaps for all parties, but certainly for Mr. Edward Roscoe, that his impatience to see Walter out of the house did not urge him to pay that young gentleman another visit till some time had elapsed after Richard's revelation to him. When he did come, "Bradshaw" in hand, Walter had cooled down, and was found, though with a somewhat trembling hand, engaged as before upon his plan-drawing.

"You have not much time to lose, my good fellow," said his visitor, with friendly solicitude, "if you want, as I conclude, to catch the night mail. I have ordered the dog-cart to be round in twenty minutes."

"I am sorry that you should have troubled yourself, Mr. Roscoe; but if I go to-day it will only be to my old quarters at the head of the lake, and I should not go even so far as that without saying good-bye to Grace."

"Not surely after her expressed wish that you should not seek to see her, Mr. Sinclair?" answered the other, in a tone of mild astonishment that suited ill with his knitted brow.

"Yes, I remember what she wrote perfectly well, but I intend to hear that wish from her own lips. It is possible that I may have given you a contrary impression. I have also heard all your brother had to say upon the subject; but I have been thinking over the matter since, and that is the resolution to which I have come. And it is not to be broken."

"Nothing, Mr. Sinclair, but your youth and inexperience can excuse such a conclusion," observed the other, calmly. "It is an outrage upon hospitality, to say the least of it. You will compel me to ask Miss Agnes herself to give you your *congé*."

"I shall not take it even from her, but only from Grace herself."

"Then you will at least take the consequences," exclaimed Mr.

Roscoe, furiously, "for in that case I will have you turned out by the servants."

"You have dropped your mask, however," replied Walter, coolly —though indeed the other's face had lost its natural expression and *become* a mask, with rage and malignity painted upon it—"that saves me all further circumlocution, at which I am at such a disadvantage with you. As for turning me out, I possess a revolver, and if any violence is offered to me I shall look upon you as the instigator, and give you its contents. You will have the 'first chance,' as the lawyer said to the mortgagee."

As the other stood silent for a moment, and menacing, as a volcano before its outbreak, Agnes was seen to hurry by, crying out, "Mr. Roscoe, Mr. Roscoe!"

He threw open the door at once—not sorry, perhaps, to have his interview cut short. "I am here; what is the matter?"

"I am afraid Grace is very ill," she answered, excitedly. "Philippa and I can do nothing with her."

Walter came forward to the door. The flush of anger had passed from his face, which now only showed anxiety and alarm.

For the moment Agnes forgot his changed relations with her sister, and with womanly sympathy observed:

"Yes, indeed, she is very ill, Walter. The doctor should be sent for at once, Mr. Roscoe."

"To be sure. I will order Saltfish to be saddled at once; she will do the five miles in twenty minutes. Perhaps Mr. Sinclair himself would like to go."

"By all means," Walter was about to say, but a glance at the other's Mephistophelian face prevented it; he remembered, too, Richard's last injunction, "Budge for nobody, and least of all for Edward," and was not this Edward's advice?

"No, no!" put in Agnes, quickly. "The mare is queer-tempered, and must have one she knows for her rider. Tell Charles to go."

Mr. Roscoe turned away at once to obey her.

Having received no instructions from her domestic adviser as to giving him his *congé*, Agnes would, as Walter sagely judged, be open to reason.

"With sickness in a house, Miss Agnes," he said, softly, "it is generally advisable for the 'stranger within its gates' to depart. But being at the cottage here, it is impossible that I should be in anybody's way. Under the circumstances, therefore, I must ask your leave to remain where I am till I am assured of dear Grace's safety."

Perhaps Walter's youth and good looks pleaded for him, though she had a suspicion that his presence would be unwelcome to Mr. Roscoe; or perhaps Grace's illness touched her woman's heart. She hesitated, and looked round as if for advice, but Mr. Edward was in the stable-yard and out of reach, and in the end, nature had her way.

"Your request does not appear to me unreasonable, Mr. Sinclair," she replied; then added, more doubtfully, "So far as I am concerned, of course you are very welcome to my hospitality."

"Then no one else has a right to deny it to me," said Walter, quickly.

This was imprudent, because it suggested the very obstacle Agnes had in her mind.

"That is so," she answered; "still, circumstances may arise—What is it, Mr. Richard?"

Richard Roscoe was approaching from the Hall, evidently in a state of great excitement. "What is it?" he echoed, vehemently. "Merely that you are, among you, trying to send to heaven before her time the sweetest soul that ever dwelt in human form. Philippa tells me that Grace is in a high fever, and does not recognize you as her sisters—not, Heaven knows, that *that* is any proof of madness!"

"You must be mad yourself to say so," exclaimed Agnes with indignation. "I shall certainly acquaint your brother with the language you have thought fit to use to me."

"He may murder me if he likes, but he shall not murder Grace," cried Richard. "I know the temptation is very great to all of you. You want to divide by two instead of by three."

"What, in Heaven's name, does the man mean?" asked Agnes, addressing herself to Walter.

"*He* doesn't know," continued Richard, scornfully; "but my cunning brother knows, and I think *you* know. You will tell him what I say, and get the house cleared of me as well as of Sinclair. Then you will have Grace all to yourselves to do as you please with, and there will be murder done."

"If there is enough sanity in this man to make it worth while to note his words at all," said Agnes with dignity—"I call upon you, Mr. Sinclair, to tell him what I have just said to you: "that you are free to stay here as long as you please."

"That is so, is it?" said Richard, as Walter bowed in confirmation; "then here we remain together to keep watch and ward over the innocent, and to take vengeance, if they work their wicked will upon her, against the guilty."

"There is no one, Richard, who means any harm to dear Grace, I am sure," said Walter, soothingly. "The doctor has been sent for, and let us hope his report may be more favorable than you imagine."

"You don't know Indians as I know them," observed Richard, laconically, and with that he entered the cottage and retired to his own room.

"Permit me, Miss Agnes," said Walter, gently, "to express my sorrow that I should have been compelled, in your presence, to listen to such wild and wandering words. If I might venture to advise you, I would say, 'Let them be forgotten.' It is clear that poor Mr. Richard is not himself, though I cannot imagine what has caused him to entertain the monstrous idea to which he has given expression."

"Nor I," said Agnes, coldly; her anger had not left her, but was rather subsiding. The charge Richard had made against her was most unjust, but it was not absolutely groundless, for that division by two instead of three was a sum Mr. Roscoe had often spoken of to her. Nor was the cause of Richard's excitement, since she knew of his secret for Grace, so inconceivable to her as she pretended.

CHAPTER XLIV.

DIFFICULTIES.

THAT nothing happens for certain except the unexpected is a dogma that all of us have to subscribe to. It is proved in small matters as well as in large ones, alike in the case of those who have dramatic experiences, or who lead homely and uneventful lives. The inmates of Halswater Hall were no exception to this rule. After the painful scenes and violent quarrels that had lately taken place among them, it would have hardly seemed possible that a week, far less a month, hence would have found them all living together under the same roof, and, outwardly at least, in the same fashion as before. Yet so it was. The result was brought about by the dangerous illness of Grace Tremenhere. When, after her interview with Mr. Roscoe, her sisters, alarmed by her absence from the family circle, went to her room, they found her, as has been said, in sad case, and when the doctor arrived he gave a most serious report of her.

"Your sister," he said, "is suffering from the effect of some severe shock to her system. I do not wish to be intrusive, but it is absolutely necessary for the proper treatment of her case that I should know what has happened."

Dr. Gardner (as he was always called, though he was only a general practitioner) was by no means of the ordinary type of country doctor. He had an independence of his own, and practised medicine because he liked it. He was highly esteemed in the county, and, what is very rare with men of his profession, was on the bench of magistrates. It is probable that Mr. Roscoe would not have sent for him if the services of a more pliant practitioner could have been procured on equally short notice, but there was no time to pick and choose. Morever, it was not Mr. Roscoe, but the two ladies, to whom he was addressing himself. His countenance, a fine florid one, looked so grave behind his moon-shaped spectacles, that they did not venture to deny the conclusion to which his professional observation had led him. Philippa indeed was so frightened that if she had been alone she would probably have given him every detail; but when the two sisters were together the elder was always the speaker.

"The engagement between my sister and Mr. Sinclair, of which you have doubtless heard," said Agnes, "hrs been suddenly broken off."

"Oh, that's it, is it?" said the doctor. "Um! ha! And not, I suppose, by the young lady's own desire?"

"Yes; the disruption is her own act entirely. It is in no respect a family arrangement, if you mean that," was the brusque reply.

"Nay, I meant nothing of the kind, madam, but only to get at the facts," returned the doctor, dryly. "I may take it, I suppose, that her determination, however necessary and unrepented of, has given her pain?"

"No doubt," exclaimed Philippa, glancing with tearful eyes towards the bed, where Grace was lying with flushed cheeks and wandering speech, "that is what has done the mischief."

"To minister to a mind diseased is beyond my skill, Miss Philippa," observed the doctor, gently, "but we must do what we can." He wrote out certain prescriptions, and then said, "I will send Miss Grace a good nurse."

"My sister and I are surely the proper persons to attend upon her," observed Agnes.

"No. Relations are too sympathetic. In a case like this it is most important that there should be nothing to excite the patient.

She will be here to-night. I will pay an early visit to-morrow morning."

There was only one way, it was said in Westmoreland, of evading Dr. Gardner's prescriptions—by dismissal; and Miss Agnes was not prepared to go that length. She noticed, however, with great displeasure, that for the future he preferred to address himself, when giving orders about his patient, to Philippa instead of herself; and though she had had no idea in her mind other than a kind one, in preferring to nurse Grace with her own hands, the doctor's refusal of her request made Richard's wild accusations especially hateful to her.

"That woman's as hard as nails," was the doctor's reflection as he rode away. "My objecting to her tending the poor girl because she was too sympathetic was a good one; by which, as he rolled his head and winked his eye in evident enjoyment of his own humor, it is reasonable to suppose that he meant "a good joke."

As he mounted his horse at the Hall door, Mr. Roscoe had a few words with him in his self-assumed character of head of the house. The doctor spoke with much greater plainness to him respecting his patient than he had done to the ladies. "The case is a very serious one, sir, in my opinion, and not the less that its origin is an affair of the heart."

So far was the idea from Mr. Roscoe's mind that the two sisters could have been so imprudent as to acquaint the doctor with family affairs, that he actually imagined him to refer to Grace's having heart disease. "I have never heard that she was so affected," he replied.

The observation, though so artless, by no means impressed the doctor with his simplicity; he only leaped to the right conclusion at once. "This gentleman," he said to himself, "takes it for granted that I have been told nothing, and has no wish to enlighten me."

Mr. Roscoe instantly perceived his mistake, and began speaking of Grace's change of views with great freedom.

"It is a resolution she has come to from the arguments of her trustee and guardian," he said; "none of us have had anything to do with it. Her conclusion, however, is in my opinion a just one; but of course the sentiment remains. Under such circumstances (and since her intention is unalterable) I conclude it would be well, to avoid any risk of excitement, that the late object of her affections should leave the house as soon as possible?"

His tone was as indifferent as he could make it, though the hav-

ing the doctor's opinion on such a matter upon his side struck him as of great importance.

"It is impossible for me, Mr. Roscoe," answered the doctor, gravely, "to say either 'yes' or 'no' to that question at present. It is only too likely that it may make no difference to the poor girl whether the young man goes or stays; she is on the brink of brain-fever; but should she survive it, it would, in my opinion, be the wiser course to keep Mr. Sinclair—and from what I gather from her sisters I conclude he has no wish to go—within reach. His presence may be of the greatest service; and if the worst comes to the worst, it may be a comfort to her to wish him farewell."

"With brain-fever?" inquired Mr. Roscoe, cynically, his disappointment at the other's reply getting the better of his usual self-restraint.

"I am supposing that she comes to herself again," answered the doctor, harshly, for he too had a temper of his own; "if not, I presume Miss Tremenhere will not grudge the hospitality she will have thrown away upon him. Good-afternoon, sir;" and with a curt nod he puts spurs to his cob and rode away.

"An impudent apothecary!" was Mr. Roscoe's comment as he turned to enter the house; but, however he may have despised the man, he felt that a spoke had been put into the wheel of his plans, which, for a time at least, would interfere with its working. Even in his anger, however, he clearly perceived the source of this mischance. "This all comes of the senseless frankness with which that old busybody's questions have been answered up-stairs," he muttered to himself. "Agnes I can trust not to lose her head, but Philippa, where sentiment is concerned, is always a fool." He did not feel any especial resentment towards Walter, as a less practical schemer would have done, but, since it was now probable that the young fellow would stay on, resolved to treat him with civility. And thus it happened that things went on at the Hall with tolerable smoothness, notwithstanding late events. There was a difference of course, however, in the manner of their going. In spite of their dread of the sick-room, Agnes and Philippa were a good deal, by turns, in their sister's room, and scarcely ever appeared together in public, even at meals. These were always melancholy affairs; for many days the Angel of Death hovered over the household and laid its finger on every lip. The doctor, indeed (none of your despairing ones), could at one time only say, "I do not yet give up all hope." It may be imagined, therefore, how Walter's spirits sank to zero, and the gloom darkened on Richard Roscoe's brow: they found a melancholy con-

solation in each other's company, but seldom interchanged a word. Walter knew that he had Richard's sympathy, but never guessed the sufferings—so blind is love to others as well as to its object—that he endured upon his own account. Agnes was genuinely grieved, and Philippa passionately so; her soul was wrung with remorse as well as pity. Mr. Roscoe alone was resigned to the obstruction that interfered with his plans, and looked confidently to nature to remove it. He had no ill-will to Grace, he confessed to himself, but it would be a great relief to him if she went to heaven. *Dis aliter visum*, or, as he expressed it, "this business turned out as badly as every other infernal thing that he had put his hand to." Grace got better; it was not the worst thing that could have happened to him, but it complicated matters that were already in a very serious tangle. The rejoicings of the houshold jarred upon him in a manner that, looking at himself from the outside as it was his habit to do, almost alarmed him.

Disappointment and delay he had hitherto borne with wonderful equanimity, considering the dangers they brought with them, but he felt that he was now losing his patience and his temper. As there is nothing so successful as success, so he was well aware there is nothing that precipitates calamity like desperation, and yet he was growing desperate. He knew it and fought against it, but, though slowly, despair was gaining the upperhand of him. Perils environed him on every side of which no one knew, or knew all, except himself. As Josh had foreseen, and even taxed him with that folly, Edward Roscoe was a gambler to the core; he could perceive the rashness of it in others, with whom it took other directions, and he had often profited by it. He was not even blind to it in his own case, but his overpowering egotism and confidence in his own sagacity had led him into enormous speculations, which had turned out ill, and involved him in liabilities which he had no means of meeting except by driblets and fair words. He was furious, not so much with his ill-luck as with the failure of his own forecasts. He had been taken in by inferior scoundrels. If he had had any, one might almost have said that his self-respect was wounded. What helped to drive him to despair was the atmosphere of hate—his own hate, and of his own making—with which he was surrounded. He had never cared for any one but himself, but that very solicitude had hitherto prevented him from indulging in animosities which are always disadvantageous; he had had, at the worst, only a cold contempt for those who stood in his way or thwarted his schemes. But now he began to hate them. Even his brother, though Agnes had never revealed his conduct to

her, had become an object of suspicion to him. He resented his familiarity with Walter, and felt that he was not to be depended upon for carrying out his scheme with respect to Grace. If the girl had died this would not have mattered, but she was getting better. If she got well, and was reconciled, in spite of all that had come and gone, with Walter, it would not matter; but he was none the less angry with Richard. He now repented that he had made a confidante of either of the sisters with respect to the document that he had intercepted; women were not fit to be trusted with secrets, though, at the time, it had seemed to him the safest course to take. It was not likely that they would reveal it, since it would be the destruction of their own expectations. If Grace should ever marry Walter, she should never know but that she did so otherwise than to her own detriment; he would be always Sinclair to her and never Vernon—though Roscoe now wished that he had kept that matter to himself. But he hated Sinclair, because there lay in him—though he knew it not and should never know it—the potentiality of seizing the whole Tremenhere estate for himself or his offspring.

Philippa, indeed, Mr. Roscoe could hardly be said to hate; but he was exasperated with her for her weakness about the young people, which had enlisted the doctor on their side, and also for a certain obstinacy which she still occasionally exhibited in opposing his wishes. The person he hated most of all was the lady whose hospitality he was enjoying—and who had done him a hundred good offices—Agnes Tremenhere. It is said that the very wickedest of us have a tender spot in our hard hearts for those who love us, that even a Sykes has a weakness for his Nancy. But this is not only not the case, but in some instances their very liking for us aggravates our dislike for them. Perhaps if Agnes had always been subservient to him he would have had the same contemptuous tolerance for her as he had for Philippa, but her occasional fits of fondness found no favor with him; while her opposition, which was much more frequent and resolute than that of her sister, now inspired him with a feeling that was little short of fury. Mr. Edward Roscoe felt, in short, that he was becoming dangerous; a thing which would not have troubled him much had he not been aware that such a frame of mind was likely to be hurtful not only to others but to himself.

CHAPTER XLV.

"EDWARD'S QUEEN."

GRACE TREMENHERE had survived the crisis of what had been a most dangerous illness, and was on the road to recovery; she had returned to consciousness, but yet could hardly be said to have "come to herself." Her condition resembled that of some would-be suicide who, having been rescued from the fate she has sought, says to herself, "Am I alive, or am I dead?" and then comes suddenly to the sad knowledge that it is the Present and the Past that she is confronting, and not the Future.

But the Grace Tremenhere whom we knew she was no longer. Her beautiful hair is shorn, her eyes are caverns, her cheeks are shrunk and pale; but all that is nothing compared with the hopeless void within. The consciousness of the full extent of her misery has come back to her. When she awoke first with a sane mind, it so happened that only the nurse and the doctor were in the room.

"Is he here still?" she inquired, feebly.

"Yes, my dear, he has not gone yet," said the nurse, consolingly. "Miss Grace is asking for you, sir."

The doctor took her place by the bedside. He knew that he was not in the girl's thoughts at all, but that did not wound his *amour propre*. His weather-beaten face was full of the keenest sympathy, yet cheery too; of all his medicines Dr. Gardner was, his patients said, the most wholesome tonic.

"Yes, my dear, he is still here," he said.

"Then he does not know," she moaned, and closed her eyes.

The doctor's position was an embarrassing one. He was not in his patient's confidence, nor, indeed, after that first visit of his, had he been in that of her sisters. Mr. Roscoe was a book clasped and locked to him; or, as he himself expressed it, like a railway company of whose time-table "Bradshaw" scornfully remarks, "No information."

With Walter Sinclair, however, the doctor had had some talk, and was thoroughly acquainted with that young gentleman's sentiments, as well as with his views of the situation.

"It doesn't much signify, my dear, what he knows, or what he does not know," answered the doctor, dryly; "he cares for nothing except to hear about you. If he has any regard for me, it is as for one of his old Indian friends, and Mr. Richard's, because I am the 'Medicine Man,' and in attendance upon you. Every morning it is 'How is Grace?' and never 'How do *you* do?'"

Her eyes were lit up for a moment with an intense delight, which slowly died away as she replied with a sigh:

"I can't see him—I *daren't* see him."

"Of course not, my dear. The thing is not to be dreamed of at present—or perhaps, as you were about to say, even at all. Still he will remain here till you are well and strong. Now tell me, is there anything you can think of that will give you pleasure?"

"Nothing, *nothing!*" she moaned, despairingly.

"A friend of yours has been writing almost every day to me, one who loves you very much in a fatherly sort of way; when you get a little stronger, don't you think you would like to see *him?*"

"Yes. I should like to see Mr. Allerton very much."

Dr. Gardner nodded, and put no more questions. He was more than satisfied with the state of his patient. He had the reputation of leaving those he attended upon too soon upon the road to recovery, not so much because he shrank from the least imputation of making the most of them, as from his horror of humbug; but Grace Tremenhere's case was an exceptional one in his eyes. He knew that he should soon see her convalescent in its ordinary sense, but he wanted to see her cured—which would, he felt, be a very different thing. So interested had he been in the matter, that he had taken the unusual step of communicating with Mr. Allerton, by whom his good intentions had been thoroughly appreciated. It is possible for two honest men to understand one another, even upon paper; and it would have amazed the Council of the Law Association to know how many letters—and those long ones—one of its most eminent members had written without charging his correspondent sixpence for them. He had readily promised that in case of Grace's recovery he would come down to Halswater and see her, though he detested the country in winter, and long journeys—unless at so much per foot—at all times.

Grace was not, however, in a condition to bear such an interview, and in the mean while Dr. Gardner discouraged the presence of her sisters about his patient as much as possible. He saw that she shrank from them, though he could not guess the cause; which was

no slur on his sagacity, for she could hardly have explained it herself. What troubled her almost as much as her estrangement from her lover was the new and terrible light which Mr. Roscoe had thrown upon her father's character; and though she had accepted it to a certain extent, she was, strangely enough, more apprehensive now than she had been before of hearing anything from their lips to his disadvantage. She need not have been so, for they had both something else to think about much more pressing than their father's memory; but from Mr. Allerton she felt she would get the truth, without the alloy of disappointment or resentment. She had little hope but that Mr. Roscoe's account of the manner in which Walter's father had been tricked and ruined was correct; the more her mind dwelt upon it —and it shared her mind with that other wretchedness which was its consequence—the more she felt that he could not have invented a story so capable of refutation, but still he might have exaggerated it for his own purposes. If it was true, in its disgraceful entirety, would Walter be still staying on under the same roof with her? She was obliged, alas! to answer for him—because she knew he loved her so—that that might be the case. For her sake he would forgive all, perhaps, and be content to wed with shame, for it was with her father's shame that she identified herself; and it rested with her to prevent the sacrifice.

To the mind not only of the man of the world, but of any person of average common-sense who has overlived those social superstitions, which are to the full as monstrous as our spiritual ones, this sensitiveness of feeling may seem ridiculous. If one has done nothing wrong one's self, how can one be smirched by another's wrong? But even otherwise honest and good men are found to be so cruel and unjust as to think ill of a person because of his illegitimacy, and Grace was no more illogical than they—indeed, had her case been another's she would have taken a just view of it; but to some sensitive and delicate natures injustice loses its wrong when they are themselves its victims.

In those days of growing convalescence there was at least one comfort to Grace, that Mr. Roscoe did not come near her. She dreaded beyond everything to see the man that had destroyed the edifice both of her faith and of her love, and she wondered at her immunity from this infliction. Agnes wondered also; it seemed so strange that Edward, who always did exactly what was right, should not have seized the first opportunity to congratulate the girl upon her recovery, but she did not make any observation to him on the

matter; the relations between them had become strained on account of her refusal to assist him with a loan of larger amount than usual. She was not fond of lending her money even to him, and perhaps she reflected that his finding himself short of it would hasten his movements in the direction which she still wished him to take as much as ever. She was tired of waiting for this laggard lover, and at the same time resented his making use of her property without having established the right to do so. Moreover, his application had been couched in much less loving and seductive tones than he had hitherto given himself the trouble to use. He was getting impatient and reckless. Philippa, on the other hand, was not surprised that he was loath to intrude himself upon the presence of one whom his revelations had made so miserable; but that was not, in fact, the cause of Mr. Roscoe's failure in what Agnes termed "a natural attention." His position had become too perilous, his temper was too severely tried, to admit of his conforming even to the most ordinary conventions. If either sister had remonstrated with him for his neglect of their invalid, he would probably have said that he did not care one farthing whether she was dead or alive.

Neither of them did so, though for very different reasons, and what affected Agnes much more than his brutal indifference to Grace was his growing familiarity with Philippa. This had become very marked; for though his behavior towards her was in no respect more tender than it had been, he was constantly in her company and alone. They walked together in the garden and in particular on the cliff terrace above the lake, at the end of which a tower, or "Folly," as it was called by the neighbors, had been erected. It was scarcely used even in warm weather, though it had been designed as a summer-house, and it was strange indeed that it should have attractions for anybody at the present time, when the mountains were covered with snow and the waters sealed by frost. No one but a woman who has felt jealousy could understand the rage that filled the heart of Agnes Tremenhere when she first saw her sister and Edward Roscoe leave the garden and climb the steps that led to the cliff terrace together. It was not love that took him there, but only the desire of speaking with his companion—on a very different subject—without fear of interruption; but Agnes thought it was love, or rather the pretence of it, which was almost as bad. And Philippa knew that she thought it, and was not displeased. She had often made her sister jealous, but never with such apparently good reason, for Edward's caution had hitherto restrained her; but now he did not

seem to care for prudence. So Philippa took her revenge in feminine fashion for many a snub and slight she had received at her sister's hands.

One afternoon Agnes was in the sick-room, paying a more perfunctory visit to "her dear Grace" even than usual; there was no longer any cause for anxiety on the patient's account, and her thoughts were just now dwelling upon other things—the fact that Roscoe and Philippa were walking together in the garden below, for one thing. She was not even talking with Grace, upon whom at the moment the nurse was attending, but idly engaged in turning over the leaves of a school history she had taken down from its shelf. It had been one of Grace's lesson-books, not so long ago, when Philippa had been her governess, and was divided into portions with a note here and there in Philippa's hand. On some occasion when she had taken up that book, it is probable that her mind, like that of Agnes at the present moment, was astray from the subject before her, and had dwelt on other things. One historic passage had the phrase "Philippa, Edward's queen" in it, and the blue pencil in some wandering moment had underscored the words. The writer had doubtless merely wished to see "how it looked," with the intention of rubbing it out again, but she had forgotten to do so, and there it stood, "Philippa, Edward's queen," *in italics*. The writing on the wall of Belshazzar's palace could scarcely have filled those who saw it with deeper emotion than that which the sight of that blue line evoked in its reader, but the meaning in her case had nothing of mystery in it; it was its very plainness that drove the color from her cheek and turned her heart to stone. She wondered that Philippa had dared to indulge in a day-dream such as this, but she tore out the leaf and placed it in her bosom—a proof, indeed, of the treachery she had long suspected. As she did so, her eyes chanced to glance at the window, and through it perceived her sister and her companion ascending the winding steps that led to the terrace. With a wild cry, which startled Grace in her pillowed chair, she rushed from the room.

CHAPTER XLVI.

"SHE IS MY WIFE."

The shades of early evening were already falling, and the day had been bitterly cold, but Agnes Tremenhere delayed only long enough to throw on her bonnet and shawl before taking her way to the terrace. There was a fire in her blood that prevented her from feeling the fog that was rising from the mere, or the wintry air upon the hill-top. We cannot hold a fire in our hand by thinking of the frosty Caucasus, but passion is stronger than imagination, and can for a time ignore all physical inconveniences; she trembled in every limb, but it was not with cold. As she hurried up the winding steps that led to the cliff-top she had no definite purpose in view, she had not thought of what to say or what to do; a blind instinct of rage and hate impelled her to seek out the treacherous pair, and tax one of them at least with her perfidy. The proof of it, that lay in her bosom and seemed to burn it, was slight indeed; but coming as it did upon the top of a hundred corroborating circumstances, and, above all, at a moment when her jealousy was at its height, it brought conviction with it. Philippa, "Edward's queen." She tried to think of the shameless woman only, and not of her companion; she could not bear to picture *him* as yielding to temptation. It was impossible that for all these years he could have paid court to her, given her, tacitly but unmistakably, to understand that his life was bound up in hers, and of late that nothing but mere pecuniary details prevented their becoming one in the eyes of all, as they had long been in their inmost hearts, and yet have been deceiving her. These are things common enough with lovers, but of which no woman believes her lover capable. Her rival in his affection is, on the other hand, capable of anything. She will tell Philippa what she thinks of her, and in Edward's presence, so that hereafter he shall have no excuse for being deceived.

Those she is in search of are not on the terrace, but in the "Folly," a roomy and solid structure, with a stone chamber below, intended to be used as a kitchen for the accommodation of picnic parties, and

above, a well-lighted apartment commanding an extensive view. The windows are of party-colored glass, through which the landscape is supposed to be seen under the aspects of the four seasons. Unlike the seasons of the soul, wherein it is more difficult to recall our hours of adversity when we are happy than to picture our happiness when we are miserable, it is an easier task to portray winter in summer than summer in winter. There is no pane, however brightly hued, that can now bring back the hour "of splendor in the grass, of glory in the flower." At this time of year, even at noonday, the room with its spare summer furniture looks bare and melancholy, in unison with the fog and frost without. Its tenants, too, are wretched looking; they are standing by one of the windows, and fix their gaze upon it, not because the wintry scene has any attraction for them, but because each prefers it to looking into the other's face. They have not exactly quarrelled, but they have disagreed, and are very dissatisfied, though not in the same degree, with one another. It is not without difficulty that Roscoe can conceal his exasperation against his companion for her obstinacy in refusing his request for a sum of money which he has told her is necessary for the re-establishment of his fortunes. It is necessary, indeed, for him to obtain it, though not for that purpose; it is wanted to stave off the impending ruin, but that he dares not tell her. He can only use the same arguments he has often used before on less pressing occasions.

"Five thousand pounds is such a monstrous sum," she pleads. "To give you money is like pouring water into a sieve. Not that I grudge you, Edward. Hush! what's that?"

The door at the top of the short flight of stairs is open, but they have no fear of interruption, and do not sink their voices as they speak. Mr. Roscoe, indeed, speaks loudly and vehemently, his habits of caution, great and small, having alike disappeared in these later days. He pays no attention to his companion's interpolated inquiry, but answers scornfully:

"Grudge me! I hope not, indeed. I think I have some claim upon you, Philippa."

"You have, indeed, dear Edward, every claim, but—"

"What claim?" cries a terrible voice; at which Philippa shrieks aloud, and even Roscoe for a moment trembles.

Agnes is standing in the door-way, her flaming eyes fixed upon her sister, her hand pointing to her companion. "What claim can you have on Edward Roscoe? Your treacherous and lying tongue is silent! Edward, I appeal to *you*."

There was a moment of painful and embarrassed silence, and then the man doggedly replied, "She is my wife."

"Your wife! Philippa your wife! Then if you are not a liar you are a thief. You have been drawing her money—*my* money—under false pretences. Five thousand pounds! why that is half her fortune! Mr. Allerton shall know of this. So you are a rogue and a fool in one."

"He is neither the one nor the other," exclaimed Philippa, angrily. "You would never had called him so had he married you instead of me."

"You viper!"

"You offcast!"

"Hush, hush!" interrupted Roscoe, imperiously. "Go home, Philippa, and leave me to deal with her."

"Home! She will have no home after to-morrow," cried Agnes, furiously. "You have wasted her miserable fortune for her before you began to steal what is mine by rights. And as for you, who have beggared her, you will go to jail."

Her injurious words, spoken too in another's presence, would at any time have chafed Edward Roscoe's spirit beyond endurance, but now, in that moment of despair, with the consciousness that his long-cherished plans were futile, and their object known, his face was like that of a baffled tiger.

"Go *home*, Philippa," he repeated, with angry vehemence.

"One would think you were speaking to a dog," said Agnes, with a grating laugh; "and like a dog she sneaks away. I am glad to see it."

Philippa's exit, indeed, was far from dignified. Notwithstanding her last brave words she was frightened at her sister, and reassured only by the knowledge that she had her husband to back her. Now that he had ordered her away, her turkey-like exhibition of wrath was over; she felt like a boned turkey. She tottered down-stairs, and hurried along the bleak terrace, where the evening fog was thickening, towards the house. Its lights were already lit, and offered for the present at least a welcome. Was it really true, as Agnes had told her, that she had no longer a right to share its shelter? It was quite true that she had already given to Edward the whole sum, and more, that she had inherited under her father's will, in case she should marry in defiance of its restrictions. Had he, indeed, brought himself within the grasp of the law? That Agnes would show them no mercy she was well convinced. And did she deserve mercy? Had

she not by her own misconduct hurried her father, though undesignedly, to his death? The thought had often occurred to her, and always with a remorseful shock, but never with greater force than now. When she reached the house, fortunately unseen by any one, and locked the door of her own room behind her, that did not shut out this reflection. She threw herself into a chair and covered her eyes with her hands, but the awful scene presented itself to her with greater distinctness than ever. It was the night of the conflagration at the theatre. Grace had come home in safety, and her father had not been aroused. The least shock, the doctor had said, might prove fatal, but the news of her peril had been spared to him, and she rejoiced at it, though she was well aware that her husband was calculating on the old man's death. Edward and she had been married many months, and were only waiting for it to announce the fact. The terms of his will were unknown to them.

It was very late, and Edward was bidding her good-night in the corridor. She had been dreadfully upset by the events of the evening, and his manner was unusually tender and comforting; he had his arm round her waist, and was giving her a farewell kiss, when a door was suddenly opened, and her father stood before them in his dressing-gown.

"What is this?" he cried, addressing his confidential assistant. "How dare you? And you, you shameless slut!"

"Father dear, he is my husband," pleaded Philippa.

Those were the last words that passed between them. Poor "Josh" fell forward on his face and never spoke again. They carried him back into his room, but even if they had dared to send for help it would have availed him nothing. In a few minutes he was a dead man. It was no wonder that Mr. Allerton had found Philippa the next day agitated by such unexpected emotion. Though she had got over the dreadful experience in time, and, as we have seen, could even join with Agnes in her denunciations of her father's memory, she never forgot that it was her own conduct which had cut short his life. It was a string that Mr. Roscoe had often played upon, and it had always vibrated to his touch. Sometimes she even said to herself. "I am a murderess?" At others, when it was her husband's role to make light of her part in the matter, she took it less to heart; but just now remorse was gripping her. Oh, why did Edward not come? Why did he leave her alone with these awful thoughts? What could he have to say to Agnes that had so long delayed him? At last there was a knock at the door she knew, for

they had many such secret signs, these two; and Edward stood before her, pale, wild-looking, and breathless.

"What did Agnes say? What do you think she will do?" she inquired, anxiously. "Have you made it up in any way?"

"Yes," he answered, in a hollow voice. "I think she is somewhat pacified." He sank into a chair, and wiped his forehead with his handkerchief. "Have you any brandy? No, don't go down for it," he put in sharply, for she was moving quickly towards the door. She pitied his condition—which, indeed, was easily to be accounted for. What an interview must he have had, poor fellow, and all through his own boldness in confessing that he was married to her! Notwithstanding its probable consequences she admired him for that. It was a declaration which she had long desired to make herself at all hazards.

"Agnes keeps a little brandy in her room, but perhaps she came home with you, and I dare not meet her."

"She did not come back," he answered; "but the brandy is no matter. Stay where you are. Let us be together," and he looked round him apprehensively.

"Dear Edward, that is what we shall now always be," she replied, caressingly. "Out of this seeming harm, as you have often told me, good may, perhaps will, come to us. For my part I am sick of our long career of secrecy and deception. Money is not everything after all."

She rather expected an outburst from him against her "sentimental folly," but there was none. His face showed no trace of anger, but wore a listening air, as though he was willing to hear her speak on. He even suffered her to take his hand and fondle it.

"There may be trouble before us, Edward, but it cannot be so hard to bear, so far as I am concerned, as what I have suffered of late. To live under the same roof with Agnes was getting insupportable; and, even if you had not spoken out as you did just now, it could not have lasted much longer. However she may behave to us, dear Grace will, I know, be our friend, though I fear we have not deserved it. Is it not possible, now that things have happened as they have done, that we may do her a good turn?"

What she felt but did not say was, "Now that your own plan has miscarried, there can be no reason for making her unhappy, and I think you could make matters straight between her and Walter if you chose." She had still great faith in his cleverness, though, alas! but little in his sense of right.

He nodded, as she hoped in approval, and she went on with rising spirits:

"Mr. Allerton, though he is no friend of yours, is devoted to Grace, and has some influence even with Agnes; I am sure that he will effect some kind of settlement. It would be quite contrary to his wish that there should be any public disruption of the family. We must leave Halswater, of course, but it need not be under a cloud."

"Yes, Allerton is the man," he murmured, with a sigh of relief; "he will patch things up for Grace's sake. What's that?" he cried; suddenly springing to his feet. "Why are they tolling the church bell?"

"My dear Edward, what is the matter with you?" she exclaimed, apprehensively. "That is not the church bell; it is the gong for afternoon tea."

"To be sure, I had forgotten," he answered, moodily, and sat down again.

"But what am I to do, Edward? I daren't go down alone to meet her. You *must* come down with me. Do you think it possible that she will break out again before Walter and your brother?"

"No."

"Then I will go down and pour out the tea as usual. It will be best to treat her, for the present, even if we go to-morrow, as if nothing had happened."

He did not answer her, though he still wore that listening look. The beating of the gong had ceased, but the wind was rising, and howled without like some unhappy disembodied spirit.

"Did any one see you return to the house, Philippa?" he suddenly inquired with great earnestness.

"No one."

"Nor me. That is so far fortunate. Now listen; we two came in together, leaving Agnes on the terrace."

"But we didn't, Edward."

"Hush, you fool! I say we *did*. She said she wanted a bracing walk, and we left her there, pacing up and down. There was no quarrel between us of any kind. Do you understand?"

She did not understand, but she began to suspect. She stared at him with horrified eyes; her tongue clave to the roof of her mouth.

"You can keep a secret, I know," he went on in a menacing tone. "You have kept more than one of your own. Keep mine."

"Great heaven, what have you done?" she cried.

"Nothing. I left her there—*we* left her there; there is no para-

pet—she may have fallen over into the lake for all I know. Come down to tea. There is no fear of meeting Agnes. Come!" He offered his hand, but she drew back, and kept him at arm's-length. Her face expressed horror and disgust, nay, even hate.

"You don't feel well enough—a severe headache? Very well, I'll say so. Do as you please. Only remember we two came in together." He was gone.

CHAPTER XLVII.

ON THE SPOT.

When Mr. Roscoe went down-stairs he found both his brother and Walter Sinclair in the drawing-room. They were neither of them much devoted to the institution of five o'clock tea, but they were generally present at it, because from one or other of the two sisters they learned news from the sick-room. The absence of both Agnes and Philippa on the present occasion made them not a little anxious.

"Have you any news?" inquired Walter of Mr. Roscoe.

"No," he answered; "she has not come in yet." The instant the words had passed his lips he owned his folly. Was he becoming an idiot, because of what had happened, that he could not get it out of his thoughts for an instant, and must imagine that everybody else was equally occupied with the subject? "I thought you were referring to the absence of Miss Agnes," he continued, carelessly, in reply to the others' look of amazement. "She is still out-of-doors; and, unfortunately, Miss Philippa, I am informed, has one of her bad headaches, and will not be here to do the honors of the tea-table, so we must help ourselves."

As they did not seem inclined to do this, Mr. Roscoe poured out the tea for them, and not with his usual neatness of hand; he was thinking of something else—listening again—and spilled it. Walter noticed his preoccupation, and guessed its cause—or a part of it.

"Miss Agnes cannot surely be out-of-doors in this weather; it is snowing."

"Thank heaven!" exclaimed Mr. Roscoe, mechanically.

We often do thank heaven for strange things, even for things that would appear to have their origin in quite another place; just as we often, alas! pray to heaven for gifts that are far from celestial in their

nature, and which can only be secured at the expense of our fellow-creatures. Still, the strangeness of Mr. Roscoe's exclamation attracted the attention of both his hearers.

"What on earth should you want snow for?" inquired his brother.

Richard's manner, like his own, had undergone some change of late. He had never been so subservient to Edward as it was his obvious duty (or at all events his interest) to be; but he had now become irritable and antagonistic. He took little pains to conceal the opinion he entertained of his nature and projects. Edward had come to the conclusion that it would be necessary to get rid of this relative, who had the insolence to ban what he had been sent for to bless, and so far from being a helpmate was a hindermate; only just now much more serious matters than his dismissal were on his mind.

"Well, you don't understand agricultural matters in England, my good fellow," he answered, "but the country wants snow. When that has fallen the frosts will probably break up."

"At present, though the snow *is* falling," replied Richard, curtly, "it is colder than ever."

"It is strange indeed that in such inclement weather Miss Agnes should still be out-of-doors," observed Walter, going to the window and throwing back its gilded shutter. "The lights in the garden are lit, so that she must know it's late; where has she gone?"

"Miss Philippa and I left her walking on the terrace," said Mr. Roscoe, speaking with great distinctness. "I told her it was near tea-time, but she said she felt in need of exercise, having been in attendance on her sister this afternoon, and would take a turn or two more."

"The steps are very slippery this weather," observed Walter; "I think some one should go and look after her."

There was no reply to this remark, so Walter left the room, put on his great-coat, and went out. It was already dark, and the snow was falling heavily, so that it was not easy, even by help of the garden lamps, to find one's way to the winding steps that led to the terrace, though Walter had keen eyes, which had been used to heavier snows than ever fall in Westmoreland. It was certainly no evening for a delicate woman to be abroad in. He thought it possible that Miss Agnes might be snow-bound or fog-bound in the summer-house, and afraid to venture back along the unprotected walk, with its cliff descending down into the lake, so for the summer-house he made. Its door was standing open, which corroborated his view of the matter, and he went up-stairs crying, "Miss Agnes! Miss Agnes!" in

order not to alarm her by his sudden entrance. It was an unnecessary precaution. The room which had of late been the scene of such a stormy interview was empty, and in place of those voices of passion there was only the shrill cry of the wind, and the soft crush of the snow as it huddled against the window-pane. "Miss Agnes! Miss Agnes!" Heaven only knows whether she heard him, but there was no response. Walter was now seriously alarmed. It was next to impossible that she could have wandered off the terrace on the landward side, because she would have had the lights from the Hall to guide her, but it *was* possible that in keeping too near them she had fallen over the cliff. On his way back he met both the Roscoes, with servants and lanterns, and they made what search they could, but the whirling snow hid everything. Before that began to fall the marks of the passage of any heavy body down the friable steep would have been discernible, but it was now hopeless to detect them. The lake beneath had become unapproachable, for while no boat could be put on it on account of its icy covering, the ice was not thick enough—it seldom was in "fathomless Halswater"—to bear the weight of a human being. There was nothing for it but to wait for the morning, and in the mean time to hope. It was just possible that even now Agnes had reached home by some other route.

It was a terrible night for the whole household—sickening to those who suffered from suspense, and far worse to those who knew. Agnes was not popular, but as they thought of her, lost in the whirling snow or drowned in the frozen lake, it was not her defects that were dwelt upon. She had been a hard woman, but not an unjust one; prudent, but not close-fisted; a good but not over-exacting house-keeper. If this is not much to say in her favor, and yet all hearts (save one) bled for her for pity's sake, think what suspense must mean to households (there are thousands of them) whose bread-winner is at sea, "given up" at Lloyd's, but not at home, or whose darling is reported "missing" in the wars! Heaven shield us, reader, from such miseries! A score of times the doors were opened to the night, and anxious faces peered into the white gloom; a score of times there was heard, or seemed to be heard, a knocking, a tap, a voice, and they said "Hush!" or "That is she!" But she came not. Grace, of course, knew nothing of her absence; she had sorrows of her own enough, and was spared that awful watch. But Philippa—Philippa was more to be pitied than even Agnes. She knew, though she tried to persuade herself that she knew not; or at all events she knew that her husband knew. With that knowledge all love for

him—the last relics of it—had fled from her bosom; nay, the very fact that it had ever filled it increased her loathing for the man. The recollection even of her own antagonism to Agnes increased it. In cutting short her sister's life he had deprived herself (oh, cruel and remorseless wretch!) of the hope of reconcilement.

"I did not kill her," Roscoe said to his wife that night, "so help me Heaven! It was her own fault. As we were walking home together she stepped backward and fell over the cliff."

Philippa answered nothing, but her face said, "You lie!"

He felt that all was over between them as regarded affection—as, indeed, it had long been on his side; one foe the more, one would have thought, could not have made much difference. He was now an outcast from his kind, without one single tie to them save that of self-interest. We know what comes of the "solitary system" in jail, *at first*—how the heart of the prisoner is filled with hatred and malice against the whole world, which he accuses of having devised, or permitted, his punishment. Something of this feeling took possession of Edward Roscoe. He would revenge himself on humanity—or at all events on all those to whom he owed a grudge, or who were obnoxious to him—on the first opportunity; but in the mean time there was a more pressing matter to be attended to—his own personal safety. Though Philippa was not to be trusted, in any gracious sense of the word, he felt he could rely on her, whatever might be her suspicions, not to denounce him. If she had resolved not to assist him with that statement of their having come home together from the terrace, she would have said so. He saw that she was no longer afraid of him, that hate had cast out fear, but her silence in this connection meant consent. Even if she did witness against him her evidence would be valueless in law, for was she not his wife? But that was a revelation, unless pushed to it very hard, he would certainly not make at such a juncture.

Throughout that night, to no inmate of the Hall, save the invalid girl, came balmy sleep. Anxiety for Agnes, or at least a wild excitement, agitated every bosom. At last on the blank scene rose the blank day; the snow-shroud was over all things, and the snow still falling with silent persistence. There was no trace of the lost woman to be seen anywhere, but all the probabilities pointed to one direction. The narrow dangerous foot-way, that could just be followed in summer, on the margin of the steep side of Halswater, was of course invisible, and the only means of approach to the lake was by letting down men by ropes from the terrace, who at

great risk of immersion swept the snow away from its ice-bound surface.

At last was found, not indeed what they sought, for that was impossible, but a spot where the ice was very thin, and round it signs of fracture. Some heavy body had evidently fallen through with great force on the previous evening, and though the night's frost had sealed up the hole, and the snow in its turn had covered it, the fate that had befallen Agnes Tremenhere was sufficiently revealed. Any attempt to rescue the body was, for the present, useless; there it lay, "full fathom five," and deeper yet, and must needs lie until the ice melted and the water could be dragged. It was no wonder that Edward Roscoe had said "Thank Heaven!" when he had heard that the snow was falling, for it concealed all evidence, if evidence there was, of what had happened on land, while the lake could be trusted to keep its own secret. There could be no inquest, so he had nothing to fear from Philippa's weakness; he told his own story, and, as he had calculated, she did not gainsay it.

They had left her sister walking by herself upon the terrace, in her usual health and spirits, and there was no reason for doubt how, in that dangerous spot, she had come by her end.

To every one else, however, these circumstances greatly added to the horror of the catastrophe. It is no matter to ourselves, when our spirit has fled, what becomes of its poor human tenement, but to those belonging to us it makes a difference. It is far worse to us, "the fools of habit," as the poet tells us, that "hands so often clasped in ours should toss with tangle and shell"—and that "the vast and wandering grave" of ocean should environ one familiar to us—than that he should lie 'neath the church-yard sod. In Agnes's case, so near her home and yet so far from it, the circumstances were even more painful, yet not even Philippa thought of leaving the Hall; it seemed to be an act of desertion towards one whom she had already wronged enough. She would wait there until the last rites could be paid to her sister.

Nor did Edward attempt to dissuade her. One would have thought he would have been eager to leave a scene which, whatever part he had played in it, must have been at least an awful one to look back upon. On the contrary, he often sought the terrace alone, though never after nightfall. It is possible that with some return of his old caution he did so to make assurance sure that there was nothing left there of a compromising character, or perhaps there was some morbid attraction for him in the place such as is said to coerce those

who have the guilt of blood upon their souls to revisit the scene of their crime; but in my opinion it was the former reason. Just as a good man will entertain no scruple about having killed some cruel wretch in the act of attempting the murder of some innocent girl, so it is probable Edward Roscoe experienced no remorse in the contemplation of the fate of one who had always been as a millstone about his neck, and whose last act had been to denounce and threaten him with punishment. My belief is, that after the first few hours of terror and excitement, when he was certainly far from being himself, he thought of it no more (except for its possible consequences) than a chess-player who sweeps a piece from his adversary's board. What had happened, though there was doubtless danger in it, was so far of great advantage to him. To a certain extent it even strengthened his hands, not only by its leaving fewer adversaries to deal with, but by increasing that courage of despair which he had of late experienced. He felt that his masterful nature would now stick at nothing, and drew from it the conclusion that nothing in the way of defeat could stop him. Indeed, he had already reaped some material benefit. Though his wife showed the utmost loathing for him when they chanced to be alone together, and would even remain stubbornly silent when he addressed her upon any subject in connection with her lost sister, he found her unexpectedly subservient in pecuniary matters. She signed certain documents—the very ones she had hitherto refused to sign—which enabled him to tide over his more pressing difficulties. "What is money to me *now?*" she said, in despairing tones. "Take what you will of it, since you have taken all besides"—a state of mind which, in a wife with a large banking account of her own, seemed to him laudable and meritorious in the highest degree.

Mr. Allerton, however, whose visit to Halswater this catastrophe to its mistress had naturally precipitated, was coming to the Hall at once; a circumstance that was by no means so welcome. There was nothing, he knew, to discover, but there were persons under that roof, Mr. Roscoe was aware, who regarded him with unfavorable eyes, and he did not wish their wits to be sharpened by contact with those of the family lawyer.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

A COMFORTER.

When Mr. Allerton arrived at Halswater he was pleasurably disappointed, as our English "bull" runs, in not being made welcome, as usual, by the *de facto* master of the house. It had hitherto been Mr. Edward Roscoe's custom to receive all guests that visited the Tremenhere ladies as if they had been his own, but on the present occasion he did not even give himself the trouble to depute that office; so it strangely enough happened that Mr. Allerton was received by Walter Sinclair—a person who, so far from having any authority to welcome him to the Hall, had himself, as we know, but a precarious footing there. Moreover, the last letter in which the lawyer had mentioned his name had been by no means a letter of recommendation; it had been that which he had written to Grace, remonstrating with her on the encouragement she had given to the young man, and pointing out how very undesirable, from a practical point of view, he would be as a husband, and Walter knew that he had written it. So fair and honest was the young man's character, however, that he felt no spark of resentment against the lawyer on that account—he was Grace's guardian, he reflected, and simply doing his duty—but only remembered the kindnesses he had personally received at the other's hands.

"I am so glad you are come, Mr. Allerton," he exclaimed, as they shook hands warmly; "things are all going on here as in a ship without a rudder."

He took him to his room, which was in the cottage, next his own, and the two had a long talk together, but without touching on the subject which had placed them in antagonism to one another.

"First, about poor Miss Agnes;" said the lawyer. "Tell me, frankly, what is your view?"

Walter raised his eyes in some astonishment.

"There is nothing to tell but what has been told you. Mr. Roscoe and Miss Philippa left her on the terrace. It is a dangerous spot except in the daytime for anybody, as you will see for yourself. It

was evening, and snowing heavily; there is not a doubt that the poor lady fell into the lake."

"A ghastly catastrophe, indeed," observed the other, gravely; "and, of course Miss Grace knows nothing about it?"

"Nothing. It would be madness to tell her. Dr. Gardner will give you an account of her condition; he comes here this afternoon instead of the morning on purpose to do so. We have every confidence in him."

"Whom do you mean by 'we'?"

Walter flushed up to his eyes. "It was an expression I own I had no right to use," he said, apologetically. "I am quite aware that I have no recognized position here, but everything, as I have hinted, is topsy-turvy."

"It was always that," observed the lawyer, dryly; "or at least the person who had the least right to be there was at the head of affairs. He is so still, I suppose, and more than ever."

"In a sort of way, yes; but, on the other hand, he does not take so much upon himself; he seems to care little how things go."

"What has happened—as indeed it well may do—monopolizes his thoughts, I conclude?"

The lawyer's words were indifferent, but not his tone. He seemed to be awaiting some reply from his companion, and with anxiety, though there hardly seemed occasion for a reply.

"No doubt; this terrible event has unhinged us all, and brought us into new relations. That is why I used the word 'we' just now, for Miss Philippa takes me a good deal into her confidence."

"And not Mr. Roscoe?" inquired the lawyer, sharply.

"I can't say about that, but she certainly seems to avoid his society—which, as you know, she did not use to do. There are many changes here," replied the young fellow.

"I suppose so; that was to be expected. There is one change for the better, however, I am glad to find from Dr. Gardner's letters. Have you seen her?"

"I? Certainly not, sir. She has forbidden me—that is, before she was taken ill, and as I was given to understand in consequence of some communication from yourself, she forbade me to see her."

"Indeed. Who told you that?"

"She told me herself—that is, in her own handwriting."

"Let me see it."

Walter went into his own room, and produced the slip of paper she had written to him, "Seek," etc.

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The lawyer examined the manuscript very carefully.

"Mr. Roscoe brought you that communication?" he remarked.

"Yes. But it is Grace's handwriting," replied Walter, in response to an expression on the other's face. "Miss Philippa corroborates the fact—so far. Still the affair is unintelligible to me in some respects—though perhaps not to you," he added, with a touch of bitterness.

To this question the lawyer made no rejoinder; he shifted his chair and gazed absently before him, evidently in deep thought.

"What sort of a person is this Mr. Richard Roscoe?" he inquired, presently.

"A very honest fellow, but eccentric. He has had troubles—perhaps has them now—which I sometimes fear has affected his mind."

"Is he on good terms with his brother?"

"There is no open quarrel between them, but there is certainly no love lost. He mistrusts Mr. Edward very much, I think."

"He must be mad, indeed, if he didn't," was Mr. Allerton's cynical reply. "If that man was an American, he would be called 'the Champion Scoundrel.' Does he see much of Grace?"

"He has never seen her, I understand, since the interview in which she gave him that writing. So, at least, Miss Philippa tells me."

"Who does see her?"

"Only Miss Philippa, the doctor, and the nurse— Here *is* the doctor."

Dr. Gardner in his high boots and with his riding-whip in hand was at the cottage door. Walter introduced the two men to one another, and left them together. When they came out, after a protracted talk, they had both very serious faces.

"I will just look to my patient, Mr. Allerton, and if she is well enough she shall then see *you*."

The lawyer nodded: a complete understanding seemed to have been arrived at by these two men.

In due course Mr. Allerton was summoned to the sick-room. Grace was sitting up in her chair, but still too weak to rise to welcome him. It was a sad meeting, and at first, to his great distress, she gave way to tears.

"That won't hurt her," said the old doctor, with a wise brutality. "She would have been better by now had there been more 'ears."

He left the room, taking the nurse with him.

"I have been wanting to see you, dear Mr. Allerton, these many weeks," said Grace, placing her thin hand on his. "You are the only person in whom I have any trust."

"I am sorry to hear you say that, my dear."

"Yes; you are the only person I now see (except, indeed, the good doctor, who cannot help me) in whom I have any confidence. Agnes never comes near me; Philippa is kind, but strangely altered in other respects. They are the only two persons who can answer the question I have to put to you, and I would not apply to them in any case. Mr. Allerton, tell me truly, what was dear papa?"

The lawyer had come down to Halswater prepared to hear strange things, and with stranger things in his own mind than he was likely to hear; but this inquiry was wholly unlooked for, and his face showed it. For the moment he was silent.

"Do not deceive me," she said, plaintively; "let me know the whole truth."

"Your father, my dear girl, as everybody knew except yourself, was a money-lender. It is not a calling that is thought highly of, but he was at the head of it; moreover, it does not follow that a money-lender—"

"Was he an honest man?" she interrupted, vehemently.

"Yes. For a money-lender, as I have always said, exceptionally honest."

"Money is the root of all evil," observed Grace, with a sigh and a shudder.

"It is so stated in the copy-books, my dear, and no doubt there is truth in it. It is bad to beg and bad to borrow, and the trade of lending it is not what one calls a liberal education; still there are money-lenders and money-lenders, and your father was the best specimen of his trade I have ever known."

"Why did he hide it from me? Why did everybody hide it from me?" she murmured, reproachfully.

"Well, for the very reasons I have mentioned. Your father was so passionately fond of you—"

"His little fairy," she interrupted, in a trembling voice. "Heaven knows how I loved him!"

"And also how he loved you, my dear. He always wished you to think the best of him, as we all do. I never should have told you I was a lawyer if I could have helped it. It was weakness in him to conceal the fact, but it was love that made him weak. The

same sentiment in a less degree actuated your sisters; they had a grudge against your father, and did not spare his memory so far as they were themselves concerned, but they never strove to disturb your faith in him, and that is to their credit. For my part, I cannot imagine how you could have been ignorant of his profession."

"I knew he lent his friends money, of course, and not for nothing. But I thought he did them good, and not harm. I did not know that he was"—she sank her voice to a whisper—"a usurer."

"Who told you he was a usurer? But I need not ask. There is only one man in the world who could have done it."

"But was it *true?*"

Her pleading eyes looked straight into the lawyer's face. His heart melted within him, but his composure remained outwardly firm.

"You need not answer," she said, despairingly. "I see it was so; now tell me this. Did gold so weigh with him that kith and kin, justice and compassion, were nothing compared with it? Was he such a slave to greed that he could cheat one of his own blood of all he had, and thrive upon his ruin?"

"No! A thousand times, no!" replied the lawyer, confidently; "it is a lie, whoever told you so. In the first place, he had no kith or kin except yourselves; in the second, in my judgment he was incapable of such conduct."

"Are you sure of this?"

Even while she spoke he remembered that her father had mentioned to him, when making his will, that he had some far-away cousin; but the matter seemed to have no reference to the subject on hand, and he yearned to put that torn and tender heart at rest. "I am quite sure," he answered.

"In my father's papers, in which you told me every business transaction of his was noted down, was there any word of one with my —with Walter Sinclair's father? It was in connection with some mine in Cornwall."

"Certainly not. The name would certainly have struck me had it been otherwise. You may set your mind quite at ease, my dear, upon that point."

"Thank Heaven!" she murmured, fervently; "you have brought me from death to life, dear Mr. Allerton;" and rising feebly from her chair she kissed him.

CHAPTER XLIX.

MR. ROSCOE'S CONGRATULATIONS.

It is probable that Grace's guardian had come down to Halswater in no very exacting mood towards his ward and favorite. The letter he had had from the doctor had no doubt gone far to convince him that her complete recovery would be dependent upon the course of true love, which had been so cruelly interrupted, running for the future smoothly; and though it was both his duty and his desire to preserve her fortune for her, he felt that her health and happiness were still more important things; moreover, the fact, now patent to him, that Mr. Roscoe had, by foul means, broken the bond between the young couple, no doubt inclined him to mend it; and, above all, Grace had kissed him. Of course it was foolish of him to allow that last little matter to influence his conduct, but as a matter-of-fact it did, and he would have been worse than a fool had it been otherwise. The remembrance of how the girl he loved as though she had been his own daughter, weak and ill, and the mere shadow of her former self, had tottered out of her chair to thank him for his good tidings with a kiss, compelled him to obey her wishes as though they had been a decree of the Court of Chancery. After all, he had saved a little money for her in spite of her large charities, and she would have the ten thousand pounds which Josh had left—though less in love than to make his testament secure—to any of his daughters that should go counter to the provisions of his will; and Walter had a little money of his own, and a profession to follow.

Upon the whole, therefore, one may say that Mr. Allerton, instead of being an opponent of the young people, had accepted a retainer (from himself) on the other side. He did not grudge Philippa the good-luck which would now make her for life, and possibly forever, the inheritress of her father's colossal fortune; it was better so, at all events, than if Agnes (because she had been less kind to Grace) had been in her place, though if he had known Philippa's secret his views might have altered altogether. To have found himself outwitted by Mr. Roscoe, and *that* man the master of Josh's million, would have been intolerable to the lawyer. In the present relations, however (so far as he understood them), between her and him, no

such result seemed possible; and he could so far afford to treat his enemy with great politeness. What puzzled him was why Mr. Roscoe had endeavored to stop Grace's marriage. So long as he kept on good terms with the other two sisters, as had until lately seemed to be the case, there was every reason why he should have encouraged it. The person over whom he exercised so great an influence would have been far the richer by it, and indeed there had been a time when he had certainly wished Grace to marry. However, it was obvious, whatever his reason, that he did not wish it now, and therefore Mr. Allerton could not resist the temptation of telling him with his own lips that the young couple were in a fair way of being reconciled.

"There has been some unfortunate misunderstanding it seems," he said, "upon the part of Miss Grace; but you will be happy to hear that it has now been cleared away."

It was in the garden, where, just after he left Grace's room, he found Mr. Roscoe walking to and fro, that the lawyer made this innocent communication to him.

Mr. Roscoe gave him such a look as, if looks could wither, would have left him a skeleton, but answered, indifferently enough, "That is good news indeed."

That he did not ask for any explanation of such unexpected tidings was proof positive to the lawyer that he did not dare to do so. This he did not need, however, as a corroboration of his view of Mr. Edward Roscoe's character, which had long been formed; of late days it had taken a dark tinge indeed, and if the other could have peeped into the lawyer's mind he would have been startled at the picture of himself he would have found there.

"Is Miss Grace sufficiently well to receive visitors?" inquired Mr. Roscoe, presently.

"That depends; she has just seen *me*," observed Mr. Allerton.

"Oh, of course; you are her guardian and her friend—which last, indeed," he added, hastily, "we all are. But I suppose anything liable to evoke excitement is still forbidden her."

"The doctor tells me Sinclair may be permitted to see her for a few minutes."

"Oh!"—only a monosyllable, but it seemed to say a good deal—"things have gone so far on the way of reconcilement as *that*, have they?"

"She will not, however, be able to see any one else to-day, I should say," continued Mr. Allerton, significantly.

He would have forbidden him the sick-room altogether if he could have done so with reason.

"That seems judicious," observed the other, coldly. "Perhaps to-morrow she may be strong enough to receive my poor congratulations."

In the mean time Walter had been permitted an interview with Grace, which was positively to last but a few minutes. Under such circumstances they were sure not to waste it in mere explanations, which could be entered upon at any time if it was worth while; moreover, Walter had been warned against them by the doctor. The great point was that they were in each other's arms again.

"Heaven is very good to me," murmured Grace in his ear. Walter smiled a little deprecatingly, as though he would have said, "So it ought to be, for are you not one of its own angels?"

"I never thought to see you again, Walter, my darling, my darling! Oh, what have I not suffered?"

"No matter, sweetheart, it is all over now; you have only to get well."

"I *am* well," she answered; which was not quite true, but very pretty. The Beautiful and the True are not always the same thing, notwithstanding what the poets tell us.

"How could you, *could* you, bid me go away from you?" he whispered, not reproachfully, but with the air of one who asks for information.

"You may well ask; I must have been mad to believe them."

"*Them!* What was it they said against me?" inquired Walter.

"Nothing. Do you think I should have believed them if they had?" she answered, indignantly.

"Of course not," he said. It sounded like complacency, but he had suddenly remembered that this was a forbidden subject. "As soon as you are strong enough you are to go south, to the sea-side," he added, hastily.

"What! Away from you?"

"How could that be possible, darling? Where thou goest I will go." He was about to continue the quotation with "My people shall be thy people," but felt it far from apposite, and checked himself—not, however, as it appeared, in time.

"Do my sisters know that you are with me?" she asked.

"Yes," he said, unhesitatingly. The subject of Agnes was not of course to be discussed; but, on the other hand, reticence itself might provoke suspicion. "Philippa was most kind in her congratulations; I believe she is genuinely fond of you."

"It is sad to have to make exceptions," she answered, with a sigh. "I wish to be at peace with all the world. I suppose Agnes will come to see me presently."

The doctor had entered the room as she was speaking.

"Not to-day, Miss Grace," he observed, cheerfully; "you have had visitors enough. This one, indeed, flattered himself that you would not wish to see another after him—like leaving a pleasant taste in the mouth, which one is averse to lose by taking anything afterwards."

"The doctor is professional, even in his metaphors," said Grace, with a pleasant smile.

"I like to see my patients impudent," returned the kindly old fellow. "It may, however, be the result of intoxication. I think you have had enough of this stimulant, my dear," he added, looking towards Walter. "His five minutes are up."

The young man rose at once. Though he had said so little, he felt that there had been no loss of time. He was another man already, or rather two beings in one. His heart was filled with love and gratitude, and had no room for ignoble thoughts. He had even forgiven his enemies since all their plans had failed. In the library he found the brothers, apparently in far from amicable discourse. In reply to their inquiries after Grace, he gave them all particulars save those which concerned himself. He knew that Richard's sympathy was genuine, and he could not believe just then that even Mr. Roscoe could be indifferent to his news. Nor did that gentleman seem indifferent; he was quite interested, indeed, in some parts of the narrative, and put several questions.

"Did she really look as if she had 'turned the corner?' Was she in good spirits? Was the nurse always in her room? That doctor, who dispensed his own medicines, gave her plenty of them, no doubt."

Walter stood up for the doctor, of whom Grace had spoken very warmly, and thought there had been nothing to complain of in that respect. "She took no medicines now," he said, "except a strong tonic—strychnine."

"A very dangerous thing," observed Mr. Roscoe.

"It doesn't lie about," said Walter, "but is kept in the medicine-chest in Miss Agnes's room, and administered only by the doctor himself. He is a very careful fellow."

Mr. Roscoe was glad to hear it, glad to hear such a good report of the dear invalid, glad to find (from Mr. Allerton) that the cloud

that had shadowed the young people's prospects of late had given way to sunshine.

It would have seemed, in short, strange to Walter that Mr. Roscoe, in his effusiveness, had not shaken hands with him, but that he reflected that his offering to do so would have seemed too much like "making up," and it was evidently the other's endeavor to show that there was no need for that, nor ever had been. The young fellow was willing enough to find things on this footing. He was in Eden, and did not wish to be reminded of the existence of the serpent; he, too, wished to be at peace with everybody.

Curiously enough, Richard had manifested less concern in what he had to say than Edward, on whom he kept his eyes throughout with no very fraternal expression.

"I am afraid, Richard, you have been having some unpleasantness with your brother?" said Walter, when they found themselves alone together.

"Well, yes," replied Richard, reluctantly; "we have each been telling the other what we thought of him."

"That is bad," answered Walter, though, in truth, nothing seemed bad, or at least unendurable, to him at that moment. "It is like two women telling one another that they are ugly."

"Well, we didn't say that," replied Richard, gravely; "but let me tell you one thing: my brother is never so ugly as when he smiles, and he has been smiling on you. It is a bad sign."

"Come, come, that is a jaundiced view indeed," remonstrated Walter. "Of course he is not pleased at the failure of his plans, though he pretends to be; but, like a gambler who has lost, he has made up his mind to pay up and look pleasant. Do not let us be hard upon him, when everything has turned out well. Oh, Richard, I am so happy!"

"You deserve to be," sighed Richard. "You are a good fellow. But do not let generosity to a fallen enemy carry you too far—to trust him, for instance. The Indian is never so dangerous as when he has received a mortal wound. I have seen a man kneel down by the side of one to give him a cup of water, and get a knife driven into his heart for his pains."

CHAPTER L.

HIS LAST THROW.

Good news is the best of tonics, and the day after her interview with Walter, Grace felt that she had made great progress on the road to convalescence. The doctor, who had hitherto come twice a day, was not to visit her in the afternoon; but in the morning, finding her both able and willing to receive visitors, he gave her permission to do so after the mid-day meal. He would have preferred such excitement to be postponed still a little longer, but his patient was nervously desirous to get both visits over—especially that of Mr. Roscoe, who had made tender application to see her. It was the less easy to refuse it since Agnes could not come, for a reason that they did not as yet dare tell her, but ascribed her absence to indisposition. If Grace felt equal to receiving two visitors, she could certainly see one. In reality, she was neither so strong nor so brave as she represented herself to be. The last time she had seen Mr. Roscoe he had almost driven her into her grave with his falsehoods and insinuations; and though she had no fear of their being repeated, and was willing enough to let by-gones be by-gones, she could not forget them; but having once said, "I will see him," she had not the courage to own herself a coward.

Philippa's tone, when she brought his message to her, had not been reassuring; she repeated it like a parrot, yet with an air of distress which to Grace was unaccountable.

"You must not be astonished," she said, "if you see some change in Mr. Roscoe. He has had his troubles, like the rest of us."

In the case of any other person Grace would have inquired, "What troubles?" Her silence and want of sympathy spoke volumes, but awoke no surprise in her sister. Her wonder was that no one but herself seemed to have any suspicion of Edward Roscoe in connection with the disappearance of her sister. To her mind his very face —for she had spoken less than the truth when she said, "You will see some change in him"—was a self-accusation of crime. His hollow eyes illumined by strange fires (like natural caverns shown to visitors), his sunken cheeks, his listening and distracted air, were to

her fancy so many witnesses against him; yet, ghost of his former self as he was, she did not pity him, and felt as if she never should. In this last conviction she was, however, mistaken. She had gone to him at his desire that morning to acquaint him with the result of his application to see Grace.

"She will see you at half-past two," she said. "You must not talk to her on any exciting subject. The interview must not last beyond five minutes. The nurse will be in the next room, and will come in at the expiration of that time."

All this was said mechanically, as if learned by rote, and spoken to a stranger, but she was satisfied with the performance of her task. She had at least shown no sign of the horror and loathing with which she regarded him. And he, too, had seemed satisfied, for indeed he now expected little from her. It was something that she could command herself—which, when they were alone together, was by no means always the case. She would give way to remorse, despair, and hysterical sobbings, to stop which neither menace nor arguments—blandishments he dared not use, she shrank from them as though he were a leper—were of any avail.

"I will come to you," he said, "at the appointed time, if you will be my usher."

But she saw him before that.

She had been despatched by the doctor to administer Grace's tonic to her that forenoon, and was on her way to Agnes's room to fetch it, when she met her husband face to face at the very door. He was coming out as she was going into the room, and they both started back in amazement and alarm. It was not a place in which either of them was likely to find the other, for it was hateful to both of them; but Philippa, as has been said, had business there.

"I came for a book," he said, in dry, hoarse tones, in answer to her wondering glance, "but could not find it." It was strange that he could not also find a less transparent excuse for what he had not been accused of, but Edward Roscoe was not himself. Nor, even of late days, had he ever looked so unlike himself. His face was livid, his eyes were wild and bloodshot.

"What is the matter?" inquired Philippa, terrified for the moment by his appearance out of the utter indifference to his well-being or otherwise that had taken possession of her.

"Nothing. You had better ask no questions. All you have henceforth to do is to hold your tongue. Forget everything else, and remember *that*."

The words were spoken like the flick of a whip, and there had been a time when they would have silenced her; but her fear of him, strangely enough, was half overcome by her fear *for* him. She was convinced that he was about to do something desperate, and, as she thought, to himself. This man was, after all, her husband.

"Edward, what are you thinking of? Do not look at me like that. It is possible to make matters even worse than they are."

"They must be worse before they are better," he answered, coldly. "Leave *me* alone, and I will leave *you* alone." She was moving after him as fast as her trembling limbs would permit her; he turned round, and faced her with a mocking smile. "You had better not; I am going somewhere where you would not like to follow me." He passed through the door that shut off the corridor from the narrow staircase, and locked it behind him.

A few minutes afterwards Philippa, with head uncovered, was running through the thick-falling snow to the "cottage," crying, "Richard! Richard!"

Richard Roscoe met her in the lobby.

"Your brother has left the house," she cried, in pitiful tones. "For Heaven's sake, follow him; I fear he will do himself a mischief."

"I think not," he answered, dryly. "Let me know exactly what has happened."

She told him what had actually taken place, for, indeed, she had no wits left to conceal, far less to invent, anything. "I met him coming out of Agnes's sitting-room, looking like a madman; he said he was going somewhere where I dared not follow him—and he is gone."

"Was that all?" inquired the other, cynically, when Philippa stopped for want of breath.

"Alas! no, it was not all. When I opened the medicine-chest in Agnes's room to get her tonic, as the doctor had told me to do—it is strychnine, you know—the bottle was gone."

"The strychnine!" cried Richard, with sudden excitement; "what did he want that for?"

"Ah! what indeed? It could only be for one purpose."

"Which way did he go?" inquired Richard, hurriedly. "Is he up-stairs or down?"

"He is gone out, I tell you. I saw him through the window, going towards the lake."

Richard reached down his wide-awake from the peg in the lobby.

"You must not go out like that in this snow," cried Philippa, with nervous carefulness; "you will catch your death of cold. Let me help you with your great-coat."

"Are you *sure* he went out-of-doors?" asked Richard, as he drew it on.

"I am quite sure."

"Well, well, I'll follow," said the other. But he was no longer in such hot haste. His apprehensions, which had seemed so keen, had unaccountably subsided. "Perhaps he is in the summer-house on the terrace."

"Oh no, I should think not," she answered, faintly.

"Why not? It is the only place under cover. Well, I'll find him. In return, however, promise me *this*—that until I come back again the nurse shall never leave your sister's room."

"She never does leave it."

"She left it yesterday," he answered, bluntly, "when Sinclair was with her."

"Walter is different, you know," said Philippa, with a feeble smile. "Nobody else would be admitted unless the nurse were present. Those were the doctor's orders."

"Never mind his orders; I want your promise that it shall be so." His tone was fierce; his manner for the first time reminded her of his brother crossed.

"Indeed, I will see to that, Mr. Richard," she answered, humbly and amazed, "upon my honor."

He nodded, and pressing his cap over his brows, went out into the whirling snow.

Philippa returned at once to Grace's room. She had resolved to stay there herself till she should have news from Richard. His words had added a vague alarm to her fears on Edward's account, notwithstanding that the two were somehow incompatible. Though in perfect health, and with wealth, as her husband had assured her, for her comfort (though it had given her none) beyond the dreams of avarice, there was no more miserable woman in all the world. How infinitely to be envied was her sister, though enervated by sickness, and with no brilliant prospect before her! She was about to marry the man of her choice; ignorant of evil schemes and plans, far less of crime; full of hope and trust; grateful even for ministrations from a hand that had helped to harm her.

"What is the matter, Philippa?" for with returning health her eye had resumed its keenness for the signs of unhappiness in others.

"Nothing, dear; that is, I am a little anxious because Mr. Roscoe and his brother are out in this dreadful snow."

"That is surely very imprudent of Mr. Richard," observed Grace. Her sympathies, it seemed, did not extend to his brother. Then presently, "I hope Agnes is really better; I have not seen her for so many days. Sometimes I fear that she does not want to see me."

"She would come if she could, dear Grace—of that you may be certain," said Philippa, earnestly.

"Have you seen her this morning?"

"I had only just left her room when I came into yours." To have to give such replies to such questions had been long the duty of those who attended Grace's sick room. They had got used to the practice of duplicity; though it was always dreadful to Philippa to have to speak of Agnes, there was just now another weight upon her mind even more oppressive. Her words were mechanical, and gave her little pain.

"There is the luncheon gong, dear Philippa; I must insist on your going down-stairs to the others; you are moping yourself to death up here. Nurse will take good care of me—though indeed I now hardly want any one."

Philippa was very willing to go, for anxiety to know whether the brothers had returned consumed her, but before doing so she laid strict injunctions on the nurse not to leave the invalid till she returned.

"I am not in the habit of leaving my patients, madam," was the tart reply. Sick nurses are angels nowadays, but their wings are of a delicate texture, and they must not be "sat upon."

"My sister had a reason, nurse," interposed Grace, sweetly, "and I am grateful to her, though you are quite right too. You would not leave me alone with any visitor, I know."

Then the other two understood that the idea of the interview with Mr. Roscoe was weighing on her mind.

CHAPTER LI.

PHILIPPA SPEAKS OUT.

THE luncheon-table at Halswater Hall had of late been but sparely patronized, but the guests were now few indeed; Mr. Allerton and Walter were the only ones that Philippa found there. Places, indeed, were laid for the two brothers, but they had not yet come in, though none but herself entertained any serious apprehensions on their account.

"Why people in the country go out in weather that they would not dream of exposing themselves to in town," remarked the lawyer, helping himself to pigeon-pie, "is always a riddle to me without an answer. It can't be for appetite, for though I have been writing all the morning, I am quite as hungry as if I had been wet through or frozen. Why *do* they do it?"

"There is no harm in it if one is strong and well," observed Walter; "but for Mr. Richard to have gone out on such a day as this is certainly very imprudent. Don't you think so, Miss Philippa?"

"No doubt it is; and I am sorry to say it is I who was the cause of it," was the unexpected reply.

Remorse, or perhaps the "late beginnings" of a resolve to be frank and open in the future in all things permissible had moved her to the confession, yet no sooner was it made than she repented of it. She perceived too late that her words required an explanation; her companions, indeed, were obviously waiting for it.

"I had seen Mr. Roscoe in the garden, and I begged his brother to fetch him in," she added, after a pause.

"In the garden, in a snow-storm!" ejaculated the lawyer. "You should have sent him out a strait-waistcoat with 'Miss Philippa's compliments, and the padded room was being prepared for him.' What on earth can they be doing, do you suppose—gardening?"

There was a look on Philippa's face that checked Walter's answering smile.

"If they do not return in five minutes," he said, gravely, "I will go out and seek for them."

"Madman No. 3," observed the lawyer.

There really seemed no possibility of their having come to harm, though it must be admitted that if there had been, the speaker would have borne it with equanimity. He detested Edward, and knew nothing of Richard except that he was Edward's brother.

"There is the front-door bell;" cried Philippa, starting to her feet. "They have come back." And with that she hurried from the room.

"Everybody is mad to-day!" exclaimed the lawyer. "If Roscoe has come back, why should Miss Philippa suppose he would ring the bell? It is not his way in his own house."

"I am really afraid there is something wrong," said Walter; "I know what a snow-storm is in this region."

"And yet you are going out in it?"

"I have promised," was the other's quiet reply, as he rose from the table.

"Very good," answered the lawyer, grudgingly; "only remember there is some one interested in your welfare, which, as far as I know, is not the case with the other two gentlemen."

The visitor turned out to be the doctor, who had come long before his time because of the snow-storm.

"It was a case of now or never," he said to Philippa, who received, though it could hardly be said welcomed him. Her anxiety about the brothers was getting overwhelming. What *could* have happened?

"Every hour makes travelling more difficult. It is weather in which one would not turn out a curlew; nobody could stand it but a country doctor. Well," as Philippa led the way up-stairs, "how is your sister?"

"Progressing, I think, though she seemed a little depressed this morning."

"Depressed! That should not have been. She had her tonic, I suppose, as I directed?"

"No, she did not."

In spite of her new-born resolutions, Philippa would have evaded the question had it been possible; but to have been caught outright in a falsehood about the matter—which was almost certain to happen—would have been dangerous indeed.

"She did not? And why not?"

The doctor had stopped short in his march along the corridor, and put the question with some energy. He was a great stickler for medical authority, and especially his own authority.

"I could not find the bottle," she murmured.

"Not find the bottle? This must be inquired into at once, Miss Philippa. It contained, as I told you, strychnine, a deadly poison, and should be always kept under lock and key."

They were standing opposite the door of Agnes's room, and the doctor entered it at once. The medicine-chest, a highly ornamented affair, stood on a bracket, with the key in it.

"You surely never left it like that?"

"I am not sure," she murmured, faintly. "The key ought to have been in my drawer; but not finding it there when the hour came for giving Grace her tonic, I thought it might be where you now see it. It was there, but the bottle was gone."

"Yes, madam," said the doctor, looking at her with great severity; "and I perceive that you know who has taken it. It is I who will be held responsible in this matter, and I must insist upon knowing it too."

"Mr. Roscoe took it."

"Mr. Roscoe!" The doctor's face turned suddenly pale; perhaps he had had already his suspicions of Mr. Roscoe, or they had been aroused by Mr. Allerton's views of that gentleman.

"This is a very serious affair, Miss Philippa. I do not leave the house until that bottle is placed in my possession. Where *is* Mr. Roscoe?"

"Would to Heaven I knew!" she answered, earnestly. "He has gone out, taking the bottle with him. He has been away for hours in this pitiless snow."

"Better out than in," was the doctor's reflection. The knowledge that the man was absent soothed certain immediate apprehensions that had seized his mind; the sight of Philippa's terror-stricken face filled him with pity for her.

"You think he meant mischief—I mean, of course, to himself—do you? But why should he have gone out-of-doors?"

"I do not think he knew what he was doing, doctor. If anything has happened to him, which Heaven forbid, he was not responsible for his actions. He has had much to trouble him of late."

"Did he go out before lunch?"

"Oh yes! Long before."

The question was not asked for the reason that Philippa supposed. The fact has been well ascertained that people do not commit suicide upon empty stomachs.

"Well, well, we must wait and see; your sister, of course, must

know nothing of this. Her tonic, if she asks about it, has been intermitted."

Grace did not ask about it. She was not one of those invalids who are solictious about their medicine.

"Am I very bad to-day?" she inquired, smiling, noticing the doctor's serious looks.

"No, miss, you are better, but you must have change of air. The sooner you can get away from this place the better."

"And poor Agnes, too. She must need change as much as I, by all accounts."

The doctor nodded assent. "When she hears the truth," he was saying to himself, "it is probable she will have a relapse."

True to his promise, he remained at the Hall, and not unwillingly, perhaps, considering the state of the weather, accepted the offer of a bed for the night.

After some hours Walter returned, looking like a snow-man. He had seen nothing of the brothers; they were not in the grounds, nor had any one the least idea where they could be. Some one had seen them walking together, he said, towards the head of the lake, and thither Walter had gone, but there was no trace of them in that direction. If they had been seen at all, they must have been going the opposite way, towards the post-town. The dinner-party that day included the doctor, the lawyer, and Walter only, Philippa having declined to appear. The meal was a very silent one till the servants had withdrawn, when the conversation, though gloomy, did not flag. The three men, being of one mind in the main, talked openly with one another.

"The absence of these gentlemen is getting very serious," said the doctor. "Is there any possible explanation of it?" The story of the strychnine—which, after all, could only affect one of them—he kept to himself.

"I have none," said Walter. "I can only say that if they have not been housed somewhere long ere this I fear it will go hard with them."

"I will say more than that: in that case they are dead men," said the doctor. "You do not take so serious a view of it, Mr. Allerton?" for, indeed, there was a half-smile on the lawyer's face. "You do not know what Cumberland is in a snow-storm."

"I don't know the scene of this drama so well as you do, doctor," answered the other, dryly; "but, perhaps, I know one of the characters better. He may have his own reasons for disappearing, but he will have taken care (of that I am certain) of his precious skin."

"But why should he want to disappear in such an unaccountable fashion?"

"It is one way of settling with one's creditors—and, unless rumor does him wrong, he has a good many. Between ourselves, he has been very hard hit indeed; and as to the fashion, nothing could be better chosen. It makes a clean sweep of the slate. It would never have done, if he meant going, to go away in a carriage and pair. His position here is not what it was; perhaps he felt that the game was up. And if he has gone, I shall be very much surprised if he has gone empty-handed. What you are saying to yourself, I know, doctor, is, 'This is a lawyer's view of his fellow-creatures;' but I know the man I am talking about."

"But, my dear Mr. Allerton," said Walter, "we have to account for the absence of two men, and not of one."

"They are two men who are brothers, however; to leave Richard behind him would have been to leave a witness against him who could never stand cross-examination. It is my opinion that they have laid their plans beforehand, and that it is a family affair."

"There, I would stake my life upon it, Mr. Allerton, you are wrong!" exclaimed Walter, earnestly. "Edward Roscoe may be all you think him to be, but Richard is an honest fellow. He would never be mixed up in anything disgraceful. Moreover, he has not the least sympathy with his brother, and hates his wicked ways."

"Well, well, we shall see," said the lawyer, cracking his walnuts. "There is no one like your scoundrel for putting a fancy value upon his existence, and I have the greatest confidence in Mr. Roscoe's taking care of himself."

"I agree with you so far," said the doctor; and indeed he was quite of opinion that Mr. Roscoe had not taken Miss Grace's tonic for his own use; "but I have grave fears for the safety of both these gentlemen, nevertheless."

As time went on, and nothing was heard of the missing men, that apprehension became general. The household was plunged in the same state of grim uncertainty that it had been on the occasion of the disappearance of Miss Agnes, but it lasted much longer. There was no key to it, as there had been in the former case.

It was noticed with surprise that Miss Philippa was even more affected by it than she had been at the loss of her sister, but this was in reality because she was seen to be affected. On the other occasion she had withdrawn herself from the rest, whereas she was now always about the house, looking through every window on the snow

that still covered the cold earth, and always on the watch for she knew not what. She suffered from insomnia, and began to give the doctor more anxiety than his other patient, who, indeed, was making rapid progress towards recovery. She had a better tonic than Mr. Roscoe was supposed to have deprived her of in the visits of her lover, and she took them twice a day. Mr. Allerton never wavered in his opinion that the brothers had gone away for reasons of their own; and when their return seemed out of the question, he ventured to express his views to Philippa herself.

"It grieves me," he said, "to see you so distressed about your missing friends. Dr. Gardner tells me you are fretting about them day and night. I am convinced in my own mind that an explanation is to be found for it."

"What explanation?" she inquired, eagerly.

"Well, it is not a pleasant thing to say of an absent man, but I happen to know that Mr. Roscoe has for a long time been in difficulties; he is unable to meet his engagements, which are very heavy, and has therefore probably run away from them. That is the plain truth."

He looked for an outburst of indignation, but she shook her head, and answered gently, "No, it is not that; I know all about his difficulties."

Mr. Allerton stared. "The deuce you do!" was what he was saying to himself.

"You are a wise man. Think, think, of some other solution," she went on in despairing tones. "Have you no hint, no clew? This suspense is more than I can bear."

The lawyer looked sharply up at her; he had never had so high an opinion of Mr. Roscoe's talents as at that moment, nor thought so badly of him.

"We have no clew because we have no data," he answered. "If his brother had been left behind we could have examined Mr. Roscoe's papers, but as it is, we have no authority to meddle with them."

"Then I give you that authority, for I am his wife!"

"Good heavens, madam! And how long has that been?"

"We were married before my father's death."

CHAPTER LII.

THE BURNT MILLION.

If the revelation made by Philippa gave the lawyer no immediate clew to the mystery in hand, it made clear another matter which had always puzzled him. Hitherto he could never understand why Mr. Roscoe had not incited the sisters to dispute their father's will. The reason was now plain. Whatever view a judge might have taken against restraint of marriage and in favor of religious liberty, he would certainly have stretched no point for a man who, living under the same roof with her, had clandestinely married his employer's daughter. That Mr. Roscoe had enjoyed—or, at all events, spent—an income to which neither he nor his wife had had any right would, under other circumstances, have been a serious consideration, but just now there were things more pressing. Poor Josh's million would, after Grace's marriage, now belong to the representatives of his far-away cousins, or, failing them, to the national exchequer. It is not possible to describe how the honest old lawyer resented this fact. He almost regretted that he had given his consent to the union of those two young people, for whom he nevertheless felt more affection than for any other of his fellow-creatures. It was really throwing money away—and such a heap of money!

Nevertheless, he not only set to work upon this distasteful matter, but took Walter into his confidence. He was a little disappointed at the lack of interest which the young fellow showed in Philippa's revelation. "You seem hardly to understand, my young friend, that but for this mad marriage of hers—about which, I fear, there is little doubt; it was done at the register-office in Kensington, within half a mile of Cedar Lodge—she would have been the richest woman in England; nay, sir—for I must needs be frank with you—I have pointed out to Grace that if she chooses to give you up she may be herself that richest woman."

"So she told me," observed Walter, dryly.

"Oh, she did, did she? Then I call it a distinct breach of confidence as between ward and guardian."

"But she also said that you were afraid matters had gone too far

between us to admit of her giving me up," continued Walter, smiling.

"I said I thought you would have ground for an action for breach of promise," growled the lawyer, "and that perhaps she would not like to appear in the witness-box; but I wish you to know what she is giving up for you."

"Indeed, Mr. Allerton," said Walter, gravely, "I put that matter before her as forcibly as my heart would let me; though, in giving me herself she had already given what is worth more than all the wealth in the world. The fact is that she detests the very name of money. Through it, as I gather, she believes her father became the man he was—and indeed, from all I hear, he worshipped it; through it, this unhappy man Roscoe has been tempted to do all sorts of dirty tricks; through it, and the jealousies and disappointments arising from it, her home, which might otherwise have been such a happy one, has been made a hell; through it, and the plots and plans to secure it, she was almost separated from the man she loves forever. It is no wonder that Grace hates money."

The lawyer listened in silence; it was not his way to hear money run down (as it often is by those who are very willing to experience its temptations) without pointing out that it may be a blessing instead of a curse, but he had nothing to say for poor Josh's million. In his heart of hearts he suspected that much worse had come of it than even Grace gave it credit for; and besides, it was now passing out of the hands of his clients into those of a stranger.

"I give you my word, Mr. Allerton," continued Walter, "that I had a hard matter to persuade her that even the £10,000 her father left her ought not to be given up, because it might originally have been wrung from the widow and the orphan."

"What infernal nonsense!" ejaculated the lawyer. "If Josh had not got it, it would have been lost at cards or on the race-course. Upon my life, even the best of women—but pray go on."

"I was only going to say that what seems to me the worst thing about Roscoe was his setting poor Grace against her father's memory. To tell her the truth was bad enough, but it seems he invented some hateful lie about his having defrauded my father, which, if, as I understand, you had not set right, would have kept us apart forever."

"Yes; that falsehood of Roscoe's puzzles me still; he had generally *something* to go upon, but that must have been pure invention. Well, I want you to be with me while I examine his papers, which

may be very queer reading. He was a methodical fellow—a good man of business in his way—and if he has not burned them, we may find some clew to his disappearance. It's a nasty thing to do, but we shall have to break open his desk."

"That is rather a strong measure, is it not?"

"No doubt it is; but desperate diseases require desperate remedies. I have his wife's authority to do it."

Mr. Roscoe's sitting-room was the very abode of neatness. Everything that a man of business could want was there, and in its place. Here the weekly bills of the household were audited and settled, and the tenants came to pay their rents. Huge manuscript books with clasps and keys, with letters painted on them, were on the shelves; their proprietor was a man who could have given an account of his stewardship—though it was never demanded of him—down to the last penny. The desk, which Mr. Allerton recognized as having originally belonged to the late Mr. Tremenhere, was an immense structure, as big as a wardrobe. It had held secrets in Josh's time which the lawyer would have given much to have got hold of, and it doubtless held secrets now. The middle part of it—the desk proper—was that to which he first gave his attention. It was locked, of course, and with no ordinary key, and it took some minutes with hammer and chisel to force it open. It was full of papers, all docketed and arranged with admirable neatness.

"I was wrong," exclaimed Mr. Allerton, as he cast his eyes over them. "The man is dead. He would never knowingly have left these proofs behind him." There were statements of accounts with the two Miss Tremenheres—some of them were memoranda, but all expressed in the most concise and careful manner—which almost made his hair stand on end: huge sums of money, varying from £500 to £5000, which had been received from them at different times, and all, no doubt, lost in speculation. On one of them, borrowed from Agnes not many weeks before, was written in pencil the words, "Very difficult"; there was no such note to Philippa's loans, which were much more numerous and larger. "What an insatiable scoundrel!" muttered the lawyer; "and I have no doubt that he spent every shilling on himself."

"There is a letter to Richard with an American postmark," observed Walter, who was looking over the other's shoulder; "I wonder how *that* came into Mr. Roscoe's desk."

"I am afraid we have no business with it," said the lawyer, doubtfully.

"I am quite sure Mr. Roscoe had none," replied Walter. "Richard has had no letter—as he told me himself, poor fellow, bitterly enough—since he came to England; and his brother keeps the bag."

"Judas!" muttered Mr. Allerton, and tore open the document. "Great heavens! this is news indeed!"

"What have you found?"

For a moment the lawyer was unable to answer him. His ordinarily impassive face was full of excitement; his hands trembled as he read.

"This concerns you, my lad; do you know the handwriting?"

"Indeed I do," cried Walter, greatly moved; "it is my poor father's."

It was the document addressed to Walter which Richard had left for safety in America, and had been forwarded to him by his correspondent; it was duly witnessed, and set forth in a simple style that for certain reasons the writer had changed his name of Vernon for Sinclair, and how he had been cheated of his property by his cousin, Joseph Tremenhere. "I have no wish that you should resume your name, dear boy," it went on to say, "and far less nourish animosity against him who wronged me; but I have thought it right that you should know who you really are, in case I may not live to tell you, and to acquaint you with my unfortunate history. The man to whom I have intrusted this paper is my dearest friend, and may be thoroughly relied on."

The frown that had at first settled on Walter's face was now succeeded by a look of the profoundest dejection.

"Then Roscoe spoke the truth to Grace after all," he sighed.

"Only just as much of it as suited his purpose. I know something you do not know. Walter, I have great news for you. Mr. Tremenhere, no doubt repentant of the wrong he had done your father, made him, under certain conditions, the heir of his whole fortune. These conditions, by the death of one daughter and the marriage of another, have been fulfilled, except as far as Grace is concerned, and now in marrying you she will lose nothing, for the money which she thereby forfeits will revert to yourself. It was the knowledge of this fact thus conveyed that no doubt caused Roscoe, who was previously in favor of your marriage, to oppose himself to it; why he kept such a dangerous secret in his possession it is impossible to tell, but we may be sure he never intended to disclose it, save for reason good. However, it has now fallen into proper hands. My dear Walter, I congratulate you sincerely; you are as rich as Crœsus."

"You mean to say that, thanks to this document, I can become so?"

"Certainly; it will only be necessary to prove its correctness."

"And without it!"

"Well, of course nothing could be proved—Madman! what have you done?"

Walter had suddenly thrown the paper into the fire and set his heel upon it.

"You have burnt a million of money!"

"I have burnt the only evidence of Mr. Tremenhere's fraud," answered Walter, coolly. "Do you suppose that the ignorance of that miserable fact will not be a greater comfort to her than the reflection that she had all the money in the world? Has her experience of what money can do been likely to induce her to value it?"

The lawyer stared at him with astonishment and horror; he hardly knew what he said; his moral nature—or that second one with which his profession had supplied him—had suffered a serious shock.

"It was too great a sacrifice," he muttered, as if in protest, "to be made for any man."

"At all events," returned Walter, smiling, "it was not an unselfish one, since, if Grace knew that her father had robbed mine, I verily believe she would have shrunk from me. She will now never know it. The memory of her father, if it cannot be what it once was to her, will at least be free from disgrace, and she will not, through conscientious (however foolish) scruples, be ashamed to take her husband."

"There is something in that," admitted the lawyer, ruefully. "Walter Sinclair—for Sinclair is what you must still be called—you are a fine fellow, and I am proud to call myself your friend. It was a fond and foolish act, but it was a noble one; and, since the mischief is done, perhaps you will be interested to learn that you are a public benefactor; failing your father's heirs, Mr. Tremenhere's money was to go to the Commissioners for the Reduction of the National Debt, and now they will have it without even saying 'thank you.' But at all events we can make them wait. Every week your marriage is postponed Grace will be putting by a thousand pounds or so; of course your engagement will now be a very long one."

"It will seem so, no doubt," said Walter, sighing. "We are to be married in the spring."

"A very appropriate time, if we are to believe the poets," said

Mr. Allerton, cheerfully; "but of course you don't mean *next* spring?"

"My good sir, if I had my way, and dear Grace was herself again," said Walter, "we should be married to-morrow."

CHAPTER LIII.

PEACE AT LAST.

NOTWITHSTANDING Walter's lover-like impatience, or, as Mr. Allerton termed it, his stark, staring madness, his marriage with Grace did not come off till a considerable sum had accumulated for the young people. Events of a very grave nature interposed between the cup and the lip. It had been foreseen, indeed, by Dr. Gardner that the intelligence of the loss of her sister, which had sooner or later to be communicated to her, would have a retarding effect on Grace's recovery, and this turned out to be the case; but there were other circumstances that helped to depress and distress her, and had she not had Walter's love to comfort her and the prospect of a happier future to look forward to, there is little doubt but that their cumulative effect would have proved fatal to a constitution already severely tried.

No news had come to hand of either Mr. Roscoe or his brother; the lake still held the remains of Agnes in its icy grasp; and while it was imperative that Grace should be removed from a spot so full of melancholy association as Halswater, it was arranged that she should leave home with Philippa (who needed change of scene at least as much as herself) for the Isle of Wight, but this could not be done without awakening suspicions and anxieties that compelled some explanation. Where were those three members of the little household—the sister for whom she still entertained affection, however ill-deserved; the friend of the family, whose absence was felt, if not deplored, in all domestic arrangements; and his brother, for whom she had entertained so genuine a regard? It was absolutely necessary to tell her why none of them were present to wish her good-bye, and the consequence was that she left home a mourner, and more of an invalid than ever. A house had been secured for the sisters at Ventnor with a large garden overlooking the sea, while Walter took up his quarters in a neighboring hotel. Notwithstand-

ing what Mr. Allerton persisted in calling his "gigantic sacrifice" (as if it had been a sale of goods), the course of true love was by no means running smooth. Indeed, at one time Grace's state of health became so serious that it seemed possible that the Burnt Million had been burnt for nothing—an apprehension which, if it did not move him to tears, brought the drops out on the good lawyer's brow.

The land agent at Halswater, whose place it had been Mr. Roscoe's intention that his brother should fill, was instructed to have the lake dragged as soon as the disappearance of the ice permitted, and the first result of that operation at the foot of the terrace walk was startling indeed. The grappling hooks brought to land not one body but two, and neither of them that which they sought. They were those of the two brothers, "clasped," as the newspaper reports expressed it, "in one another's arms." It was supposed to be an affecting incident of fraternal love. Those who knew them well knew better. Mr. Allerton's explanation of the matter, at all events—and I think it was a shrewd one—founded on his own suspicions and on what Philippa and Walter told him, was as follows:

Driven to his wits' end by the failure of his plans and the concealment of a terrible crime, Roscoe had desperately conceived another—the murder of Grace herself; for that purpose, and not for that of self-slaughter, he had obtained the bottle of strychnine which was found in his breast-pocket; this conclusion was the very one that Richard arrived at on hearing Philippa's story, and, furious, at the danger that threatened Grace, he had sought his brother with the intention of taxing him with this intention and also of obtaining possession of the bottle. He had found him on the terrace walk, on the very spot where a similar catastrophe had occurred to Agnes, and a struggle had ensued in which both brothers had fallen over the cliff. The coroner's jury, however, returned a verdict of "accidental death" in their case, as in that of Agnes, whose body was found a day or two afterwards, it having drifted for some distance down the lake.

The newspapers were studiously kept from Philippa, but the news had to be told her, and in due time she broke it to Grace. It was no wonder that the poor girl's convalescence was retarded; but in the end youth and love brought her forth from the valley of death.

Walter Sinclair was never suspected of having borne the name of Vernon, nor did that circumstance, since Grace was ignorant of it, affect the legality of their marriage. The transference of her father's

fortune to the Commissioners of the National Debt was not even a nine days' wonder—for who heeds a drop in the ocean?—except with Mrs. Lindon. That lady never ceased to have an imaginative interest in Josh's million, and to express her astonishment that no heirs to Mr. Vernon of Cockermouth were ever discovered. If she had been informed on affidavit that any human being had sacrificed such a sum, on the altar of Hymen or anywhere else, she would certainly have refused to believe it; but he who had done the deed never repented of it for an instant. The young couple have quite as much money as is good for them, and Grace can think of him who had been wont to call her "his little fairy," if not with the old trust and tenderness, at all events without the flush of shame. Mr. Allerton, who is a frequent guest of theirs, and has had many opportunities of contemplating their happiness, is compelled to own that in surrendering his place among the millionaires of England Walter has found ample compensation.

Philippa—a changed woman, and greatly for the better—resides within a stone's-throw of her married sister in the Isle of Wight, for Halswater Hall, with its sombre memories, has long passed into other hands.

In a fair garden by the sea there is a little toddler who has as yet but a single playmate, one who never quarrels with her or envies her the possession of her many toys. He is almost as great a favorite with her as he is with her father and mother; there is a tender association between them and him of which the child knows nothing. He passes his days on the sunny lawn and his nights in a well-lined basket at the foot of their bed, and though he knows no more of the Burnt Million than the rest of the world, enjoys his master's fullest confidence and affection. On what slight causes hinge our poor human affairs! "But for you, Rip," says Walter, gratefully, as he caresses the little creature, "I should, perhaps, never have won your mistress."

THE END.

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